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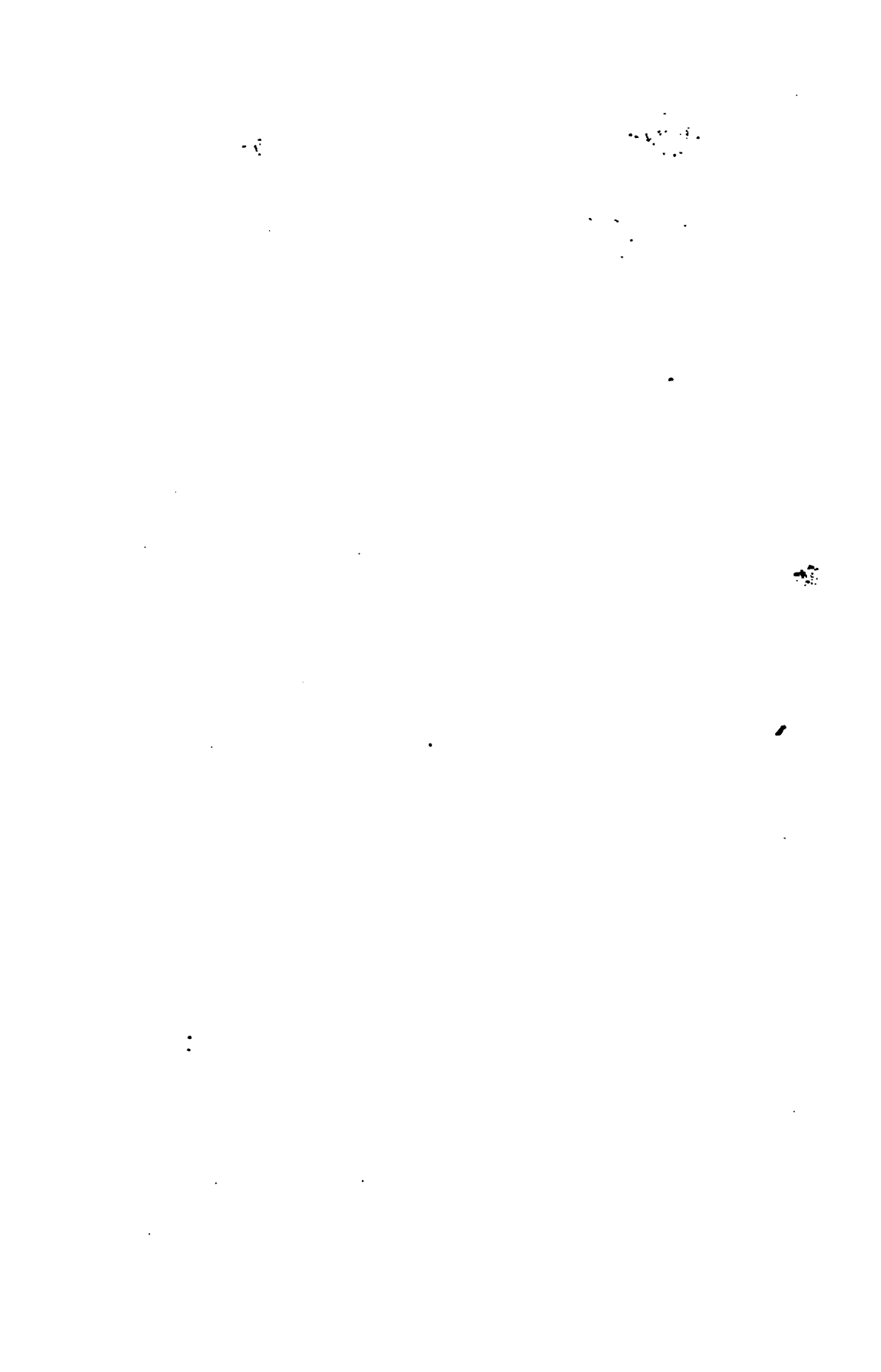
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ROUND ABOUT NORWAY







VALLEY OF GUDVANGEN.

ROUND ABOUT NORWAY

BY
CHARLES W. WOOD

AUTHOR OF 'THROUGH IRELAND'



LATE

WITH SIXTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS



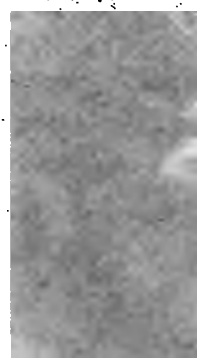
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ROUND ABOUT NORWAY

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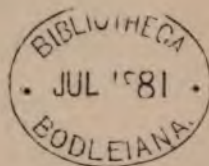
CHARLES W. WOOD

AUTHOR OF 'THROUGH HOLLAND'



LAPPS

WITH SIXTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON

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Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen

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PREFACE.

THE following pages do not profess to be anything beyond a record of impressions received during a visit to Norway. They are not the result of long research or elaborate notes, but simply records drawn from memory. They do not pretend to go into abstruse questions, social or political, religious or scientific. All this has been done by better hands than mine.

What, however, these pages do profess to give the reader is a broad outline of the features of the country, its scenery, its people and their ways and customs; with a record of such everyday incidents as generally fall to the lot of the traveller on the road, who, like the celebrated Dr. Syntax, has the temerity to set out in search of the picturesque.

C. W. W.

LONDON, *December* 1880.

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ROUND ABOUT NORWAY.



CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIANSAND—CHRISTIANIA.

NOT a land flowing with milk and honey; not a land of olive-yards and vine-yards; of southern skies and effeminate luxuriance; of Spanish dances and Italian serenades; of soft intrigues and quick revenges that wait upon life itself. Not a land of fragrant breezes, where the nightingale sings to its mate, whilst the stately queen of night rises in the dark blue dome, bathing the earth in a silvery flood, the while lovers pace romantic ruins washed by a broad flowing Rhine, or a sterner Danube; or linger in bowers on the banks of the soft blue waters of a Moselle—lovers whose lips are silent for a bliss that is filling their hearts with an emotion for which an eternity would be too short, and life, alas! often proves but too long.

Not this. But a land of eternal snows, whose mountain heights are fraught with the mystery of a

silence never broken, where the foot of man never falls; a land of gigantic icebergs, rushing streams, grand waterfalls and mighty cataracts, that seem to increase and multiply as you progress through the country. A land which owes everything to nature,



OLD STOREHOUSE IN NORWAY.

and nothing to man or to art; where ruins are not, and the nightingale's song is unheard, and bowers of roses may be imagined, but scarcely seen. A land scantily peopled, but peopled by men and women honest and fearless, simple and genuine, frank and hospitable. Until a day will come when mixture with the world which seeks them more and more year by year, may give to those men and women the faults of that world,


and rob them of their best heritage—a single eye, a simple faith, an uprightness of purpose, rare as beautiful after six thousand years of levelling. A land where railroads are scarce, and travelling is long and laborious, but very pleasant. A land not pampered by the refined luxury of the age, the scattering of wealth in pomp and vanity, purple and fine linen; but a land of stern realities, where wealth is rare, and each man's inheritance is labour and toil; where the strong winds of heaven have free play, and brace men to their daily task, from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof; where the ring of the axe sounds cheerfully through the solitudes of the vast woods, and the jovial cry of the peasant calling the cattle down from the heights closes the day's work. A land of bright, bracing air; a coast ironbound and full of wonders. A land that reminds us in a measure of the CITY that hath "no night"—the Land of the Leal; for here, during some portion of the year, the sun never sets, and darkness falls not.

For such a land, one fine day—it was the 20th of June and a Friday—the good ship *Cameo* left the docks of Millwall. That morning had first brought the sad news of the death of the Prince Imperial—news that cast a gloom over the journey and haunted one long afterwards; rising up unbidden

like a hideous phantom in the active daylight hours, the quiet, wakeful moments of the night. This ghostly shadow haunted our voyage, but there was nothing else to cast a gloom thereon. The day was bright and sunny, in a month and a year whose bright and sunny days had been like the visits of angels upon record—few and far between.

We passed through the dock gates with some difficulty. As usual, barges and other small craft seemed to have come up there for the sole and undivided purpose of retarding our progress. But we were out in the broad, open river at last, steaming downwards to the music of hammer and anvil from the factories on the shore—music that may be heard a hundred times with a hundred fresh emotions; gaining all its enchantment from distance, and a certain sentimental feeling of affection for all things English and homelike that creeps into the heart of the outward-bound.

It is all mournful enough in itself, prosaic and matter of fact; yet it all possesses a subtle, exhilarating charm. A sense of surrounding life and motion that makes itself felt and realised; whilst we ourselves, in our rapid progress, seem to impregnate the very air with motion also; and the mind is excited from the fact of being bound for that ever seductive goal, the shores of the Unknown. I had reached the



steamer plunged in melancholy, and for once almost realised the feelings of a certain friend who shall be nameless lest these pages meet his eye. One who is in the habit of forming plans for a holiday, puts his house in order, takes his ticket, enters the carriage, and just as the train is on the move, gets out and hies himself home again. Yet in all other conditions of life he is a sane man, whom to know is to esteem.

On this occasion the rapidly shifting scenes, the homeward-bound vessels passing up, so brimful of happiness that it spread itself abroad and became infectious, caused all melancholy to disappear, and by the time we were well out at sea it had ceased to exist.

There are two popular ways of reaching Norway from England ; the route by way of Hull, and that by way of London. Both routes are in the hand of the same company. The passage by way of Hull is, it need not be said, shorter than that by way of London. But to any one bound for Christiansand or Christiania, and starting from London or its neighbourhood, the latter route may safely be recommended.

The *Cameo* was due at Christiansand on Sunday morning ; at Christiania on Monday, about 7 a.m. The angry moods of the North Sea are a matter of history, and, like history, repeat themselves. But

on this occasion the sea was calm and motionless as a river. The *Cameo* is an especially good sea boat ; and the politeness of the captain towards his passengers, his endeavours to promote their comfort, left nothing to be desired in that respect.

The company, it is said, have a rule open to grave objections. " I tell it as 'twas told to me." It is commonly reported that they leave the commanders of the ships to cater for the passengers, and to make what profit they can out of the transaction. Very little consideration will show the error of this arrangement. If complaints are necessary, few would like, from delicate motives, to appeal to the captain, with whom would lie the fault. They might, indeed, fare after the manner of a certain friend (*not* the one lately quoted), who, staying at Gastein for the baths, objected to an extortionate bill at Straubinger's hotel, and, on requesting to be taken before the magistrate, was ushered into the presence of Straubinger himself, who was landlord, magistrate, mayor, and all the civic bodies of the place rolled into one magnificent whole ; made out his own bills, charged his own prices, held his own courts, heard his clients' appeals, and delivered sentences in his own favour. We have heard of a mock parliament in bygone ages ; perhaps this is not the only mock court of the nineteenth

century. To be quite fair, my friend adds that this happened ten years ago. In the meantime old Straubinger may have shuffled off this mortal coil, and delivered his staff of office to another generation. Or, if still ruling the roost at Gastein, his conscience has perhaps awakened to the error of his ways—his overcharges, and his abominable dinners, which resulted in impaired digestions—and he may be atoning for past shortcomings by undue diligence and liberality in the present. If so, who shall say that the age of miracles is past ?

I had left London with only one settled idea in connection with Norway—a voyage to the North Cape, proposed as a means of restoration to health. It was at once bracing and interesting, combining all the advantages of a sea voyage without its monotony ; since, from the time you leave Christiania or Bergen, to the end of the journey, you never lose sight of the coast. We had first intended to land at Christiansand, and there await the steamer for the North Cape. But before arriving at that port, a change of plans decided us to go on to Christiania, thence overland to Bergen, and there take ship for the longer journey.

Friday passed, and Saturday, after leaving London, and still the sea was calm, and still we looked in vain for the rough waves of the Northern

Ocean—and we were quite willing to look in vain. Sunday morning rose fresh and fair. We gradually approached land, and about eleven o'clock found ourselves at anchor in the harbour of Christiansand.

The town lay before us; on either side land stretched out low and green. To our left an English yacht was anchored, and the harbour contained many vessels and steamers, including a man-of-war. The water presented a lively appearance; flags were flying everywhere in honour of Sunday; and over all was spread that quietness and repose that seems to mark the day of rest at sea still more emphatically than on land.

From our point of view the town looked primitive and orderly. We were to stay here some hours to land cargo; small boats came about us, and soon after, we set foot for the first time on Norwegian soil. It was our first impression of Norway, our first experience of its people and customs, and curiosity was excited.

Church was over; and in Norway, when church is over, Sunday is over for all religious purposes. The remainder of the day is devoted not to work, but to rest or recreation. If any one is on a journey, it is quite proper to travel on a Sunday. The people do not take off their best clothes or their national costumes, for the most part worn

only on that day; but they meet at each other's houses, or take walks, or amuse themselves in a quiet, inoffensive manner, until the hour comes for separation. On the highways and byways you will meet lovers with arms intertwined, whispering sweet follies, just as in other countries; for though



WINTER PALACE OF THE KING, CHRISTIANIA.

so far north, and the land of snow and loud and long wintry blasts, yet all this fails to render them unsusceptible to the mesmerism of bright eyes: each in turn falls victim to the influence of the tender passion.

Only — their courtships are often slow and lengthened. It is not unusual for a youth to be wooing his bride-elect for ten or a dozen years;

so that when the marriage finally takes place, great and prolonged are the rejoicings. This is not marrying in haste to repent at leisure ; and though, no doubt, ill natures and tempers are to be found, yet, for the most part, married life is happy and united. The crimes and cruelties that mar many a home in more privileged lands would fill the souls of these fair Northerners with strange surprise.

Perhaps no better first glimpse can be gained of a Norwegian town than that of Christiansand. It is so primitive, characteristic, and typical of the country, that, in a moment, England and all things English fall from you as a mantle that is loosened, and you feel yourself at once on a foreign shore, clothed in foreign garb. Across the North Sea, England has followed you ; English people have been around you ; the English tongue has made itself heard in sounds more or less harmonious or discordant, according to the speaker. But, set foot in Christiansand, and at once, as it were with a magician's wand, scenes, thoughts, impressions are changed.

So it was this morning. No English town exists bearing the slightest resemblance to Christiansand. The day was hot and bright ; the sun came out and went in, as thick white clouds drove across a sky of intense blue. This sky alone was enough

to raise the most drooping spirits, if such had been, to a point of exhilaration. The streets, wide, white, and clean, ran at right angles with each other. The houses were nearly all built of wood; only a new



SUMMER RESIDENCE OF THE KING, CHRISTIANIA.

building, such as a bank, here and there standing out in the dignity of stone, fronted by oxydised railings looking like burnished silver; grand, but not half so interesting and picturesque to an Englishman as the less pretentious structures.

And the houses, being of wood, require constant painting. Most of them here were white, yellow, or blue, now and then a glaring red standing out in flaming contrast with its neighbours. The houses, for the most part, were of two stories, varying more

in size than fashion. This produced a sameness of aspect that would probably soon become tedious : unless habit grew into second nature, as it often does in things of more moment than the form of a house or the aspect of a street. Nevertheless, the general effect of Christiansand, as it stood out that Sunday morning in the hot sunshine, was singularly bright. Fresh, clean, and airy, it seemed rather a model or toy town, than a town destined for the occupation, the daily lives of men, women, and children.

Many of the houses, no doubt, were as old as the town itself, yet nearly all, in their fresh paint, looked but of yesterday. Cleanliness was a most prominent feature. The windows were large and elaborately set out. Fine curtains were displayed above and below, so that no one room seemed to have more honour bestowed upon it than another. From many of them plants grew, and flourished, and expanded in these natural hot-houses ; exquisite roses, drooping fuchsias, and abundant geraniums arresting the eye and raising one's envy—for elsewhere, in the open air, flowers were not to be seen, much less obtained. In some of the streets trees grew down on either side, casting their shadows athwart the hot white roadway, and relieving the painful glare.

Most of these streets were as deserted as a city of the dead. A cannon might have been fired with

eyes closed, and done no harm to living soul. Grass grew on the pavements. Quietness reigned pre-eminent. Here and there, a head stretched from an open window, peering inquisitively at the travellers through the blinds or amidst the roses, was all that could be seen of the 13,000 inhabitants. It was brightened by sunshine, but on a wet day it would be hard to conceive anything more melancholy than the streets of this quiet town. Over and over again, threading its thoroughfares, we congratulated ourselves on a change of plans; thereby escaping the terrible dulness that would have been ours whilst awaiting the arrival of a North Cape steamer on her way upwards from Christiania.

We now saw, too, that to embark from Christiansand for the North Cape is a mistake. Setting other considerations aside, you have not the option of visiting several steamers, and choosing the best, as may usually be done in either of the larger ports. Christiansand is the fourth town in Norway, but the more important steamers merely call here on their way to and from other ports and countries. Its harbour, excellent as it is picturesque, is of greater use to smaller vessels. A thriving trade, amongst other trades, is done in lobsters, which are regularly sent over to England in large quantities. But they gain in price in the English

market. In Norway, a first-rate lobster will be bought for fourpence.

Presently we came upon the Park ; a small plantation something in the shape of a triangle, with avenues of trees, and beds enlivened by laburnums and rhododendrons ; a place that gains much of its dignity from its name—a not uncommon type of animated life, where occasionally an institution or a person flourishes like a green bay-tree, because the world, following suit like a flock of sheep, insensibly accords it a title that throws a glamour over the din of its sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Here we came upon a good deal of sounding brass in the shape of a military band, discoursing sweet sounds to a large gathering of people.

It was our first experience of a Norwegian crowd, and certainly not an unpleasant one. They were quiet and orderly to a degree almost amounting to “dull apathy,” as is usual with the Norwegians. They have nothing of the pushing and scrambling, the rough mirth, so frequently the type of an English multitude. It would be impossible to imagine a Norwegian mob assembling in one of their own parks, ranting insane nonsense, and destroying everything around them. They know better, and have more sense. A large proportion of the people are inclined to republican ideas ; but they let well alone, and

are content to honour the powers that be. The keynote to the whole tenor of their lives was struck by a remark made by an intelligent Norwegian of some standing in his country, as we were steaming one day up the Sogne Fjord. "It may be," he said, "that we all have our opinions upon many subjects, but we are most of us agreed upon this point—that since we have a king, we must treat him as a king."

The crowd in the park that Sunday morning listened to the music with evident enjoyment. They were dressed in their best; and here we first learned the lesson, confirmed by after experience, that, once divested of their national costumes, the Norwegians, for the most part, resemble the English in their dress—possess the same abominable taste, the same inability to wear their garments. This remark applies more especially to the humbler classes, such as would be found in England on a Sunday morning, listening to a band of music. The girls, many of them servants of the town, were tawdry and draggletailed; their head-gear, perched like beacons upon a rock, decorated with feathers and flowers in extravagant profusion, of gorgeous colours and startling combinations.

The costumes of the country visible to-day were few and disappointing. The most remarkable were a group of men and women belonging to a

mountainous district. The men walked about in huge trousers, which came up to their arm-pits, and buttoned round their chests. The women, to restore the balance of things, wore short petticoats, which amply displayed their heavy, ill-shaped limbs. Both sexes were awkward and ungainly in their movements, and from their low cast of features, hideous costumes, and stunted expression, they looked the quintessence of an aboriginal tribe—a striking exception to the ordinary type of Norwegian peasant.

The band played its selection in front of the garrison, and soldiers in dark uniforms—some with plumes in their hats, paraded about as much to the admiration of the fair—and frail—sex, as if the scene had been a London Park instead of a quiet corner in Norway. Meanwhile, two of us found an entrance into the church, and went up into the gallery. It is called a cathedral,¹ and Christiansand is the residence of a bishop; but neither inside nor out could the edifice boast of any pretensions to architectural beauty or artistic decoration. White-washed walls and yellow-painted pews of the stiffest order; over the altar, a badly executed relief, that might have done duty in some Roman Catholic building, was somewhat in contradiction to the “severe” plainness of the rest of the church. The

¹ Since burnt down, together with a large portion of the town.

religion of Norway is Lutheran, and, perhaps, no country has less sympathy with Romanism, and in no country is Romanism making less progress. Its forms and ceremonials, appealing to the senses rather than to the spiritual part of man's nature, have few attractions for this honest, simple-minded people. For all that, it is not quite a dead letter, seeing that, where some years ago they had only one Roman Catholic church, they have now six or seven.

Quitting the church and the park, we went through the deserted streets to the river. Here ruin met the eye. A short time before, the rains had swollen the rapids and torrents; the waters poured forth their tributes, and the stream became so swift in its course, that an immense number of logs dashed with tremendous force against the bridge and swept it away. The river is wide here, and people were crossing by means of a ferry, until the mischief could be repaired.

To-day the river had very much subsided, but the water was eddying and swirling round the stone pedestals, whilst pine logs drifted in twos and threes, and yet larger numbers. On the opposite shore were groups of houses and a garrison—quite a small town. We did not cross. Time was drawing on apace; it was scarcely prudent to put more land and water between us and the *Cameo*.

About four o'clock in the afternoon the steamer started again on her way to Christiania. Christian-sand, forts, houses, and harbour looked green, picturesque, and lively, as we receded from the shores—more lively at a distance than in reality. But all was soon lost to sight as we turned the corner and plunged into full speed. Rain now began to fall, and the best of the day was over.

The next morning a few of the passengers found their way on deck at four o'clock. We were in the Christiania Fjord, whose beauties every moment disclosed themselves. On either side, banks clothed with green; forests of pines in dark abundance; villages nestling in the slopes; here and there a small vessel on the stocks of a distant dockyard. The hills opened up, range beyond range, barren, or dark with pine trees, according to their nature. Many small islands enlivened the water. Now the Fjord narrowed, bringing the land very near to the steamer; and now suddenly opened out again, broad and calm as an inland lake.

At length we sighted Christiania; and Oscarshall the summer residence of the king, stood out white and charming amidst a wealth of green, like a white jewel in a dark setting. This morning it looked hot and dazzling in the brilliant sunshine. Onward yet, a short distance, and about seven o'clock, before

us rose the mass of houses, the church towers and steeples of Christiania—and we came to an anchor.

The Scandinavia Hotel had been recommended to us; but the Victoria is the largest, is considered the best, and is most frequented by the English. The Scandinavia, however, proved comfortable, and its chef a *cordon bleu*. It is an advantage in many ways to stay at an hotel less frequented by the English than by the people of its own country.

Christiania proved far less a typical Norwegian town than Christiansand. The streets are wide, the houses most of them built of stone. The whole place looked flourishing, as befits a capital; and, for Norway, fashionable. At the end of a long, broad thoroughfare, on an eminence, stands the winter palace. It would have been almost possible to fancy oneself in a small Paris or Brussels, but for the names over the shop doors and the strange language that made itself heard in all directions.

As soon as the steamer came alongside, she was boarded by a number of porters touting for work. The small details of most countries repeat themselves. One of the men seized upon our chattels, and in a few moments had stowed them away upon a truck. The quay, even at this hour, was crowded with people, and many of the shops were already open. The Norwegians make the most of summer

and long days, and are then as early as in the dark winter months they are the opposite. We were soon marching beside our luggage, free as birds of the air, all restraint thrown to the winds, all ceremony abandoned, a glorious feeling of liberty, a longing for adventure reigning instead.

We soon reached the hotel, and before long were enjoying our first Norwegian breakfast. After the simple fare on board, our table was now luxuriously furnished; in the long, lofty dining-room it was once more possible to breathe. Here we first came upon boiled cream, served cold, a universal custom of the country; boiled, perhaps to preserve it; but a process—to descend to domestic details—that spoils it for all tea and coffee purposes. Nevertheless, in no humour to find fault with anything, we took our boiled cream thankfully; and presently even asked for more.

There is little in Christiania as distinctly Norwegian as in Christiansand. The wide, well-paved streets, with their air of prosperity, are wonderfully clean and very ordinary. The large handsome houses are chiefly built of stone; for it is now against the law to build them of wood within the town. Here, as in Christiansand, the windows are enormous, so that one might as well live in a lantern as in some of the rooms. The shops, too, are large, and, as

far as could be judged, as good as in any other town in Europe. Cats and dogs are at a premium, the latter especially, and it is illegal to take a sporting dog into the country—a law hard to be understood, but directed, it is said, against the evils of hydrophobia. There are many kinds of madness in the world.

Shopkeepers expect you to take off your hat upon entering their place of business, and think it as great a favour to serve as to be patronised. Their manners are generally polite and civil; but a neglect to uncover the head, which may easily occur when pre-occupied by thought, often leads to abruptness and downright incivility, and you are speedily brought to a sense of the omission. The French have been considered the politest nation in Europe, but they must yield the palm to the Norwegians. Half their time is taken up in bowing, which is carried to a most troublesome excess. If you meet them twenty times in five minutes, twenty times you must acknowledge their salute, or be put down as a barbarian. As you treat them, so will they treat you. Politeness meets with its return; but they have yet to learn that persevering politeness in time conquers the roughest exterior.

Norway is a country so to say without aristocracy. The only ancient nobility, if there be any, are the

humble peasants who live at many of the "country stations;" small farms descending in a direct line from father to son, since the days when William the Conqueror was yet unknown to England. These are the "inheritors of the land." Most of them are poor but proud, and their bearing has a certain dignity and freedom that causes some wonder until its origin is known. The people are very much on an equality with each other; riches and education, more than the accident of birth, separating class from class. Such terms of respect as "sir" or "madam," common in England, do not exist in Norway, and the traveller must not take their absence amiss. They are never used except by those who have come into contact with the English and learned their customs; and even then only when English is spoken.

The Norwegians have, many of them, a habit of frowning and looking forbiddingly at a stranger. As it does not appear amongst themselves, it must be supposed to have been acquired in response to a manner unhappily not uncommon amongst a certain type of the English when addressing persons they look upon as below them in the social scale. Gentleness and courtesy of manner, the "noblesse oblige," is not universally found in England. And again, many whose hearts overflow with kindness and goodwill, from a certain *mauvaise*

honte, a widespread British characteristic, assume an abruptness of speech and action that leaves behind it an impression they would never wish to produce.

The Norwegians innately seem to possess nothing of all this. There is something very noble in their disposition, especially where it has been



STREET IN CHRISTIANIA.

unspoiled by too much dealing with the outer world. For it is pretty certain that as iron sharpeneth iron, so this people, coming into contact with the sharpness and cunning of other nations, will lose much of their native simplicity and integrity. Ten years hence, travelling in Norway will be as different from what it now is, as it is now unlike what it was ten years ago.

In that first early morning we went to the fish-

market in Christiania, an interesting and uncommon sight to English eyes and ears. The fish men and women were seated in their boats beside the stone pavements, shut in from the outer water by great locks. Servants and housewives with tin baskets hanging on their arms, were bargaining for the day's dinner. Codfish, mackerel, eels, and lobsters were abundant. Anchovies—or a small fish so-called—might be counted almost by the million. The fish women with their loud voices were contending with their customers—as they have from time immemorial, and will to the end—about price. Now, one made believe to go away, when a desperate shriek would summon her back, and fish and money would exchange hands, buyer and seller each pretending to look thoroughly victimised. The sun was pouring his hot rays upon the sparkling water in which the boats were bobbing up and down. At the stern of each boat a great bough was raised, as large as half a tree, and under the shade cast by the leaves sat the fish-wives. The greatest coquette could not have conceived a more striking effect, as the leaves, glinting in the sunshine, cast their quivering reflections over the women and their surroundings. Nothing could look more picturesque in its way. The scene was lively and enlivening; the water was full of anima-

tion ; a babel of voices went on around, chattering and bargaining, interspersed with much laughter. Most of the fish were out of sight, swimming in the holds of the small boats, whence they were brought out with nets as required.



OLD HOUSE IN NORWAY.

These early mornings in the fish-market are one of the distinctive sights of Norway, where people and customs assemble and join hands for the benefit of the traveller. As a rule, our impressions have to be taken from the country alone. It is thinly populated, and you may journey many a mile and many a day, and thought, pleasures, and

experiences must, for the most part, come from the grand old hills and valleys, snow-capped, ice-bound, or torrent-swept; the wonderful pine forests, the blue skies, the rarefied air;—great solitudes, especially refreshing after the crowding and bustle of a town. There, for a time, you escape from the world: the mind recovers its tone, and gathers fresh force for the battle of life; the struggle upwards and onwards amidst the downward influences that surround it on all sides.

CHAPTER II.

DRAMMEN—HÖNEFOS—HEEN—THE SPIRILLEN—SÖRUM.

IN well-frequented countries, intersected by railways, and possessing an organised system of stage coaches, where travellers are numbered not by tens but by thousands, if you wish to reach a certain spot or place, there is no doubt as to the route to be followed. Indecision—that most uncomfortable state of mind, whether in the choice of a wife or a waist-coat—cannot arise. There, on the map, is the direct road or rail leading to your destination, and it must be taken.

It is not so in Norway. Often, twenty different roads seemed to conduct to a desired goal; and at length, after twenty conflicting opinions, you are in danger of falling into a state of mind bordering on imbecility.

Anxious to make the most of our time, and to see as much as possible between Christiania and Bergen, one of our first duties on arriving at the

capital was to call on Mr. Bennett, without whom the English in Norway would be lost. It became sometimes almost laughable to hear, during the course of one day, in our travels, in how many differ-



CHURCH OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

ent ways people made use of Mr. Bennett. Exclamations such as the following were almost as numerous as the travellers themselves :—

“ I am anxious to get to Thronhjem, whither Bennett is forwarding my letters.”

“ I must knock about the Romsdal until Bennett sends me more money.”

"I have lost a mackintosh, and if you find it, kindly forward it to Mr. Bennett."

"That seems a charming route, certainly, but Bennett has marked it out so and so, and if I varied it, I might possibly land in perdition."

"I should have been utterly lost at such and such a station, but for Bennett's phrase-book."

"I have written to Bennett, and shall abide by his instructions."

"Bennett says so and so, and Bennett must be right."

The last clencher would occur at the end of an argument, when the speaker, driven into a corner, could only come out of it with anything like dignity by delivering the words in an irritable tone, and, metaphorically speaking, sitting upon you and shutting you up.

To take railways to Norway would not be like taking coals to Newcastle, or coral strands to Africa; but the difficulties of travelling are not limited to the



NORWEGIAN BRIDE.

absence of railways. The choice of routes already alluded to makes it difficult for the uninitiated to know which to adopt. Each person has his own advice to offer upon the subject, and each person's advice varies in essential particulars. In no country so near our own shores does a like confusion of ideas prevail on the subject of travelling. Even amongst the passengers on board the *Cameo*, crossing from England, this Babel—not of tongues but of opinions—asserted itself and became rampant; and it may safely be asserted that we landed at Christiania perplexed and bewildered as to the best thing to be done. Had every one's advice been taken, it would have ended in our doing nothing; for one told us to go North, another South, a third East, and a fourth West; whilst a fifth described a circle, and obligingly put down the details upon paper.

I remember telling one person, in answer to his inquiry, that we were going up to the North Cape. "That," he replied, "is a mistake; it is loss of time, and very tedious. You will find nothing worth seeing beyond Thronthjem."

This was not very encouraging. We had yet to discover that all such remarks must be taken for what they are worth, according to the knowledge of the speaker; and especially as regards his power

and capacity for appreciating the scenes he has visited.

Within an hour of being told that to go beyond Thronthjem was little less than folly, we were again called upon to give a second questioner the same interesting information as to our plans.

"A charming trip that to the North Cape," he returned. "But everything worth seeing comes after Thronthjem. This side the old town the journey is dull and wearisome."

Here, in the course of an hour, were diametrically opposed views from two men, each professing perfect knowledge of the subject. And this experience followed us throughout Norway wherever advice was sought; a contradiction of opinions so bewildering, that at last we gave up making inquiries, judged for ourselves, and obtained satisfactory results. There are, of course, many whose advice may be trusted, but it is difficult to find them out by intuition.

As to the guide books—Murray, though good in many particulars, was somewhat bewildering; Baedeker was not then published; whilst Bennett's Guide, excellent as far as it goes, is limited. Nevertheless, it is useful, and no one going about Norway should be without it.

Thus, on our first arrival at Christiania we should have been lost but for calling upon Mr. Bennett for

information. This he gave at once, to us as to every one, in the most ready and obliging manner. We had a week in which to reach Bergen, and wished to see the best part of the country lying between that port and Christiania; including the Mørkefos or Vettifos, a chief waterfall of Norway, of which we had heard wonderful accounts.

Mr. Bennett jotted down a route, giving to each day its appointed work, each night its place of rest. This was followed out with great success. Neither at the hotel nor elsewhere could any reliable information be obtained. Even those who inspected our plan shook their heads and said they knew nothing about the matter.

In the slowness of their trains the Norwegians surpass the Dutch; and yet the latter, for this merit or defect, according to the time, nerves, and fancy of the individual traveller, may place themselves at the head of other European countries. But all comparison ends here, for whilst the Dutch possess but a small territory sufficiently intersected by lines, Norway, with its great tract of country, has scarcely any railways at all. Nor will she ever be much better off in this respect. The land is so thinly populated that railroads could never pay. From the hilly nature of the country their construction would cost much, whilst the people are poor. And lastly, the

present mode of travelling supplies all they need. Time is of less consequence to the Norwegians than to other people, because they have less to do. They do not rush through life, giving to one day the work of six. They breathe ; the remainder of the civilised world is for the most part breathless. If they have a hundred miles to travel, they can as well devote a week to it as half a dozen hours ; or if they cannot, they wisely stay at home. So that, travelling in Norway is very much what it was in England a century ago. A little slower and more leisurely, perhaps, now than then ; for nowhere in Norway will you come across the fine sight of a coach bowling over hill and dale as fast as four horses can take it. The average rate of progress by carriage is about four miles an hour ; and, do what you will, taking one thing with another, you cannot get much beyond this. Their railways by comparison are not much better ; of stately speed, perhaps, but irritating.

Our experience of railway travelling was limited to six hours. In that time we traversed about seventy miles of country. The train started at the unearthly hour of six, and after a hard day's sight-seeing in Christiania, and late going to rest, we had, unwillingly, to be stirring the next morning at five o'clock. A hasty breakfast, and the porter, with our luggage upon a truck, piloted us to the station.

The streets looked melancholy and deserted: the houses were not open for the day; the shops, even in this early town, had not yet taken down their shutters; there was no life or movement anywhere.

The train was soon in motion, the sleeping town left behind. We passed slowly beyond the suburbs of Christiania, with their white, picturesque country-houses dotting the sloping hills, reposing amidst trees, flowers, and a certain luxuriance of cultivated vegetation that is a rare feature in Norway. There is an air of wealth and fashion, too, about many of these houses, peculiar to the neighbourhood, and lost as we progress onwards. They are the cool retreats to which the richer people of the capital escape for the hot summer months of the year.

The journey was slow but pleasant, the scenery beautiful. If the lingering train possessed no other advantage, it allowed every point to be noted almost as well as in a journey by coach. To the left, as we steamed away from the capital, was the beautiful Christiania Fjord, its waters blue and tranquil; to the right, a range of hills bounded the horizon, a misty purple bloom upon them, which the early morning sun was gradually lifting, as a thing too refined and delicate for the broader, bolder hours of the day to gaze upon. We passed factories awaking to their day's work; streams of water ran

beside us, now smooth, now rushing wildly over a



A NORWEGIAN WEDDING.

shallow rocky bed ; skirting plantations of sombre firs, with mysterious depths impenetrable to the eye.

Towards Drammen the scenery became more striking. We shot into a tunnel splendidly cut out of the solid granite rock, and out again upon a far-stretching view. On the right the Drammen Fjord opened up its lake-like waters, the town itself reposing amidst hills lofty and undulating, and clothed in pine forests. To the left the rich valley of the Lier expanded, dotted with hamlets; other tunnels were passed, and the train, skirting the very edge of a precipice, stopped at Drammen. This is one of the few important towns in Norway, and is given up to the timber and metal trades.

Here we waited many minutes, a favourable opportunity for the hasty breakfast at Christiania to be supplemented by a second. The refreshment-room displayed tempting dishes of meat cut in artistic slices, and we rashly seized upon one. What the snare was will never be known, or how it tasted ever be forgotten. Sentimental visions of poison and a tomb in a foreign land took hold of the imagination. But the presiding genius, a true daughter of Anak, fierce-looking enough to be the giant's wife who boiled all the children for her lord's supper, brought up a famous cup of tea, supported by excellent bread and butter. Here at least was home-like fare, in which lurked no mystery, no poisoned arrow. We could hold no converse with

her, for she spoke no language but her own, of which we understood not a word. So we fell back upon the freemasonry of signs; and, as is often the case, a nearer acquaintance melted the fierce aspect into something very like gentleness of look and manner. To settle our money differences I held out to her a handful of small coin (a large handful may comprise a very small sum) in order that she might take what was owing; and her moderate charge proved that to take advantage of our ignorance was her very last thought. This was not always our experience in Norway.

Every one returned to his carriage, and the drowsy train went on again. The scenery was still beautiful and diversified. The stream was frequently crossed, and we passed many waterfalls trickling down the hills like silver threads, whilst here and there cataracts leaped wildly into the river and helped to swell the torrent.

Towards twelve o'clock we reached Hönefos, and rumbled over the long bridge that opened up to our wondering view a vast sheet of rushing, foaming water, one cataract above, beyond and beside another, emptying itself in boiling rage into the river, whilst down below, its fury spent, it glided along, rapidly indeed, but comparatively calm. It was a wild, lovely spot. The hills, the quaint town,

and the seething cataracts, closed the view on the one side, whilst on the other the country opened out



HØNEFOS.

in a rich, fertile plain, with quaint Norwegian farm-houses, the river winding along like a broad band of silver set with jewels composed of sun flashes, until, turning to the right, it passed, in music indeed, out of sight. Not the "music of the spheres," that

Pythagoras dreamed of, and Kepler expanded to a system, and Shakespeare reduced to an expression ; but the more tangible, more audible music of Nature, that, in a grand harmonious chant, surrounds the traveller on all sides amidst such scenes, and in a silent hymn of praise ascends to the regions of eternity, carrying with it both heart and soul.

The train halted all too short a time to take in the wonderful beauties of the place, and feast upon the rushing water, the greatest mass of living foam I had ever seen, of which our illustration gives but a faint idea and small section. We went on, and in a few moments reached Heen, and the end of our journey by rail. Here we were to take the steamer up the Spirillen lake to Sörum, our first night's resting-place.

A primitive, picturesque country station. Close upon us were hills and crags covered with wild tangle in glorious confusion ; above, pine-trees grew to the very summit, casting just now no long shadows, for the noonday sun was over us. A few steps down the hill, a turn to the left, and we came to the little boat getting up steam, and preparing to start at one o'clock. A small group of people were assembled, none of them displaying any of the costumes of the country. All were strangely quiet. The Norwegians, without being phlegmatic—they are too generally cheerful and contented for that—

for the most part lack animation. Loudness of voice and gesture is not one of their characteristics, whilst its absence is a marked feature. Their enthusiasm runs in still waters, and perhaps is the deeper.

On the bridge of the steamer sat an old lady and gentleman, who proved to be going a considerable portion of our way. It might be seen at once that they were brother and sister. Refined, sensitive faces, pale, clear-cut features, and an expression brimming over with kindness and goodwill towards mankind, distinguished them.

As long as we were together—until the afternoon of the following day—this kindness of disposition was abundantly manifested in thoughtful, small self-sacrifices towards the two strangers visiting their country. It was delightful and refreshing, a moral tonic, to encounter such people, who go through the world scattering their good seed broadcast.

Their devotion to each other was such as might be expected in lovers. Often it was impossible to avoid smiling at their demonstrations of mutual affection—carried to excess according to English views—yet delicious at their age from its youthful ardour. Here, at least, were two enthusiastic people, exceptions to their race. In this, our first experience of travelling in Norway, they were of great service

to us, pointing out their system of doing things, and making clear much that would long have remained misty and uncertain.

Mr. B., as we will call him, spoke a little English and a little French, and Miss B. a little German ; by which means we managed to get along with some degree of understanding. Not another soul on board spoke anything but Norwegian. Before starting we had managed to make the captain comprehend that, if within the range of possibility, we should like some dinner on board—we had thirty-five miles and a six hours' journey before us : and he, by signs that would have made the fortune of a clown in a pantomime, replied that they were equal to the occasion.

The voyage up the lake was one of our pleasantest bits of Norwegian travelling. Banks on either side, varied and picturesque ; here and there slopes well cultivated and fertile. Houses dotted about, and small settlements, many with slanting, overhanging roofs, like Swiss chalets ; others of light wooden construction, gaily painted, like the houses of Christiansand. At every small station the whistle sounded, the engines stopped, and a boat shot out from the shore, to bring up a passenger or carry off cargo. Once only we went alongside, landed sundry bags of meal, and stayed half an hour—an oppor-

tunity improved by some of the passengers to land and take a friendly glass of beer. Beer is an institution in Norway.

In the distance, mountains, gloomy and severe, rose abruptly, and we were soon upon them. The little steamer looking dwarfed and tiny as she hurried past their frowning, barren sides. Great masses of rock, stern and terrible, that were too much for kindly, gentle Miss B., who clasped her brother's arm as if for protection from their threatening looks. Here and there we passed over a small rapid, through which the little boat tossed as on a miniature sea; not unfrequently we had to steer out of the way of huge rafts of pine logs lashed together. One spot on the slope was worn smooth and bare as a road, and for a moment we wondered what had caused this bald place amongst the fir-clad hills; until, at the summit, dwarfed by distance, might be seen men hard at work; great pine logs, stripped of their bark, came rolling down the incline, splashed into the water, and shot out upon their downward journey.

Presently a fresh, clean-looking maiden, in a snow-white cap and apron came up, and smilingly informed us that dinner was served. Instinct more than reason interpreted her message. We followed her into the little cabin, and with a "Var so got"—

literally "Be so good"—the "If you please" of the Norwegians, and the phrase used by them on all possible occasions, whether telling you that your dinner is served, your carriage is waiting, or politely excusing an injury—she closed the door upon us, and left us to our repast. It consisted of tinned beef steaks, potatoes well boiled, and excellent beer, the almost universal beverage of the country, light and frothy, and always bottled. Drunk as soon as opened it is very good, but quickly becomes flat, stale and unprofitable. Here was a banquet far exceeding our modest aspirations, for which the sum of two shillings and threepence was charged.

The lake was about sixteen miles long; at the end of which the boat passed into the river Baegna, the only difference being that the stream now narrowed and became more rapid. At certain times, when the river is not navigable, travellers have to land at Naes, and complete the journey by road. The scene was grand as we steamed upwards. To the left rose the huge and precipitous mass of rocky mountain that seemed to terrify Miss B., and really looked like some petrified monster of nightmare dimensions about to take back its animation and annihilate us—dark, gloomy and frowning sides, perpendicular walls rising high and wide out of the water. It was almost a relief to pass into the

regions of more smiling, fertile hills, giving shelter to farms and plantations of birch-trees, some of which, uprooted by the rising waters, were nodding a farewell to life, and sinking into the stream.

Thus we made way, until, about seven o'clock, we reached Sörum. Mr. Bennett's plan had marked a stage farther on by land ; but our kindly fellow-travellers were going to make Sörum their headquarters for that night, and urged us to do likewise—a proposal we willingly and wisely adopted.

Up the little landing-pier, and a few yards onwards, we came to the settlement of Sörum, our first sight and experience of a Norwegian "station." By the help of these "stations" one gets through the country, and without them travelling would be out of the question. The stations, as a rule, take their names from the people to whom they belong, and who generally live in them. They are for the most part small farms, more or less cultivated and productive, according to their individual resources and the industry of their owners. Some yield grain, others food for cattle—sheep, cows, and horses ; and goats multiply in abundance. You may see the little creatures skipping about high up on the hill-sides, from point to point, and from rock to rock, with wonderful agility. Towards evening, passing along the road, you may hear a boy or girl with a

peculiar jödel cry, something like that of the Swiss peasant, but more weird and unfamiliar, collecting the goats or the cows by this simple call, that in the solemn stillness reigning in these solitudes



ON THE ROAD TO SÖRUM.

floats far up the heights, and brings the scattered cattle together, who follow one another leisurely, in a long, winding string that may be traced for a considerable distance. Then, all landed and milked, some are put away for the night, and the rest are sent back to pass it upon the heights.

These "stations" are the farm-houses and their outbuildings, never originally intended for the uses to which they are now partly devoted. With the increase of travellers in Norway the Government and the people have recognised the greater need of accommodation ; and the stations have gradually developed from the poorest and roughest quarters into something not luxurious, and still humble and primitive, but clean and decent, and sometimes tolerably comfortable. It is all very different now from what it was in days gone by. A fellow-traveller told me that when going through Norway twenty years ago, he and a party of six ladies and as many gentlemen were all ushered into one bedroom at one of the principal stations—the only bedroom the house contained. This was given up to the ladies, and the gentlemen sat out the night in an adjoining room, much to the surprise of the unsophisticated Norwegians, who could not understand why people should make themselves so unnecessarily uncomfortable.

It is not so now. Accommodation has greatly increased, even in the last four or five years. To-day a traveller will rarely find himself at fault for a bed, though not always given a room to his own share. Yet rooms, beds, and stations are still limited, and should travellers increase rapidly in

Norway, it is not easy to see how the wants of the case will be supplied.

The station at Sörum was one of the most primitive in Norway, and perhaps it was as well for our experiences not to begin with the best. On the other hand, it was one of the very cleanest, and the people were amongst the most civil and attentive. For such a station the fare was excellent : and nowhere, as it afterwards proved, were we more comfortable than at Sörum. It is rather out of the beaten track of travellers, especially English travellers, and it has remained among the least changed.

Most primitive it seemed at the outset of our experience, and in our ignorance I am not sure that we quite appreciated our blessings. The house set apart for travellers was on the left ; opposite was the building devoted to horses, and the open shed for vehicles ; to the right the house where the people of the station, and any homely travellers that might pass that way, lived and slept ; the whole settlement thus forming three sides of a quadrangle, built of wood dark with age, and very picturesque. To the left, in a line with our building, was the storehouse, upon four rough pedestals of stones, placed one upon another without mortar or cement, which kept the stores high and dry above the damp earth, the rising of the waters, the deep snows of winter. The

interior was devoted to the storing of all articles of food and use that the damp might injure—provisions to carry them through the dull dark days of the long winter, their season of inaction and little work.

We entered upon a good-sized room, the general sitting-room of the station, roughly, yet not uncomfortably, furnished. A bare floor, an ordinary round deal table, spread with a white cloth, a few common chairs, a horse-hair sofa, and a sort of half cabinet, half chest of drawers, painted red, decorated with quaint, gaudy flowers, and bearing a date and the name of the hostess in a flourishing inscription. This is a general piece of furniture in Norway, and seems to be a kind of certificate of marriage ; not very easy to carry about in the pocket, but, on the other hand, not like "marriage lines," capable of being mislaid or overlooked.

The charm of the room lay in the windows, and the view they looked upon. Sloping hills and mountains, covered with rich plantations of trees that glinted in the sun, and now cast long shadows. On the farther side, gloomy pine forests, relieved by the brighter green of the larch, here and there a barren mountain all rock and granite, cold and stern. To the left flowed the river, up which we had just travelled, the little steamer moored to the landing-

stage, at rest until six o'clock to-morrow morning, when it would start on its journey back to Heen.

Our bedroom, immediately above the sitting-room, was large, airy, and contained four small wooden beds, one in each corner; a rough wash-hand-stand under one window, a basin on a chair under another. Next to this, two smaller rooms, occupied by Mr. and Miss B.

Our first visitor, after we had looked round, settled our small amount of luggage, and found everything surprisingly clean, was a goat with formidable horns, that came trotting up the wooden stairs, paid us a visit of inspection, and then went off in search of prey. Its fancy fastened on a straw hat lying upon the table. This, with sublime indifference to the laws of meum and tuum, it appropriated, and, without rescue, would have demolished, perhaps devoured. Then came the hostess after the truant, and a chase began in which the goat had the best of it. Finally it darted below stairs again, followed by the dame, breathless and out of temper; uttering words it was no doubt well neither we nor the goat could interpret.

Then we too went down, and found supper ready; and Miss B. quickly followed us into the room. Her manner of entering was regal. A step forward, then a courtly curtsey to one; another step,

and a second curtsy to the other ; a third step, and a curtsy that embraced both. As we were in duty bound to return the civility, a looker on might have taken us for a small court, making a royal progress through the country. Next came Mr. B., as uncere- monious as his sister was stately, all fatherly kind- ness and anxiety for our welfare. Miss B. presided at the teapot. In her nervous anxiety to do the honours with credit to her nation, the dear, kind, gentle lady upset the lid into A.'s cup, which he held uplifted, and sent the hot fluid down his arm, of which it made more free than welcome. A. said afterwards, with the true spirit of chivalry, it was worth a small amount of pain to receive her showers of graceful curtseys and apologies, and, by assurances that the scalding liquid was rather pleasant than otherwise, subdue her distress. But the mishap was soon over, and in nowise took from the harmony of the tea-table.

The meal ended, in the setting sun we wandered for a short walk into the woods behind the house. The forest was casting mysterious depths, far into which we did not penetrate. Spread out before us, through and around and amidst the trees, in wildest profusion and most exquisite beauty, grew the tender fronds of the soft green oak fern, so abundant that it was impossible to place the foot and not crush them.

Nothing could be lovelier than the scene. The narrow path led through a maze of verdure. The setting sun threw its red glow amongst the trees, lighting up the sky and the floating clouds, tingeing the opposite mountains, and warming the waters of the river flowing to our left. Here and there a small silvery waterfall trickled down the mountain side. Amidst the ferns wild flowers grew in abundance, some of which are not to be found in England.

Lower sank the sun, each moment changing and deepening the tints and shadows upon the landscape : until, disappearing, as it seemed with a sudden bound, he warned us to return.

We found Mr. B. at the door, smoking a long pipe ; with this lover of mankind a very calumet of peace. We talked of many things, English and Norwegian. All the shadows melted into darkness and night ; the station people disappeared one by one ; the hush of repose, a solemn stillness that made itself felt, fell upon all things, and we, too, sought a well-earned rest.

Alas ! the next morning was wet, and our ardour was considerably damped in consequence. Our programme would not admit of a day lost on the road, yet to travel in a downpour of rain was neither profitable nor pleasant. But at ten o'clock the clouds seemed to break, and hope set in. Miss B., who

had stepped over for a moment into the other house, came to the door and called me in to show their system of churning in Norway, and exhibit a dish of trout just taken out of the river.

It was a gloomy room, the floor dark and earthy. In the chimney burned a fire of wood and peat. In the middle of the room a maid splashed away at the churn—just such a churn as I had seen in Shetland some time before, in the hands of a certain Kirstie—a long narrow barrel, and a long churn-staff that the strong maiden was working up and down to a distinct measure. It was hard labour, and the drops splashing about the floor kept us at a respectful distance. The trout, fresh and beautiful, were Miss B.'s especial admiration and delight, and she tenderly and lovingly inquired whether we had them in England, what they were called, and whether they were appreciated at their full value.

Just then Mr. B. came in with the welcome news that the sun was breaking through the clouds, the rain had ceased, the day would yet be glorious.

So it proved. Then, as one obstruction was removed, another sprang up. Only two carriages were to be had, and one *stolkjaer*, the latter a machine consisting of a long flat piece of wood suspended upon two wheels, on which a seat is erected for two people. They are rough and uncomfort-

able, whilst a well-built carriole is a very pleasant conveyance. These never hold more than one person. The seat is small; the springs are often merely a continuation of the shafts, which are so long that the horse seems a long way from the driver. In the carriages you have to be your own Jehu; your luggage is strapped on behind; and the post-



NEAR SÖRUM.

boy, who has to bring back horse and carriole from the next station, takes his seat thereon. The harness is generally made of cord, and, if hard, answers every purpose; but new cord cuts the hands, and is disagreeable to hold.

Mr. B., with his usual good-nature, insisted upon our taking the carriages; he and his sister the *stolkjaer*. We knew not then the sacrifice he was making; but all the wisdom in the world would have made no difference. In a choice between

better and worse, nothing would have induced him to choose the better. Such characters are rare and beautiful.

Behold us, then, at eleven o'clock, en route. Mr. and Miss B. taking the lead, A. following, I bringing up the rear; an unusual, lively, and decidedly high-spirited cavalcade. It is, indeed, difficult, for any one but a confirmed hypochondriac to be anything but elated in Norway, with its freedom from restraint, its Bohemian life, its light, sparkling air. A crack of the whips—as primitive as the harness, a farewell to the worthy folk of Sörum, who turned out in a body to see us start, and away went the fresh, jolly, strong little horses; Miss B.'s head enveloped in a hood, which the wind inflated to dimensions so extraordinary and grotesque that A.'s horse once or twice came to a dead stand, blinked his eyes, pricked up his ears, and gazed in a paroxysm of astonishment and admiration; from which he could only be aroused to a sense of his duties by the enforcement of severe measures.

CHAPTER III.

LINDHEIAN—STORSVEEN—VOLD.

THE mode of travelling in Norway is simple and unpretending, befitting the necessities and ideas of a simple-minded people, one of whose greatest charms is an absence of that vulgar pretension which seeks every occasion for display and going beyond its neighbours in magnificence. I do not believe anything of this sort exists in Norway.

The system is easy and inexpensive, and, as far as it goes, well organised. But if Norway should become a popular country with tourists, they certainly would have to take their horses and carriages with them. And in this advanced age, when people go north, south, east, and west; when there is a perpetual thirst for something new—new emotions, new impressions, anything for excitement; when ladies visit the Nile for a little change of air, and ride over the Rocky Mountains in undaunted solitude, and with an admirable courage given to

few women; when the North-East passage has become a thing of the past, and the course of the Gulf Stream is at man's disposal: surely, when all these changes are taking place, a country so near our own shores as the iron-bound coast of "Gamle Norge," will have its day and generation; will be



NORWEGIAN "STATION."

visited, lionised, inspected, criticised, devastated, and finally abandoned—who or what is constant in this world?—by the kings, lords, and commons of the earth.

But ere Norway has become a prey to the Philistines, let those who can, enjoy what remains of her original freshness. It will not last for ever. As long as the world turns, the sun and moon run

their course, and the law of gravitation keeps people comfortably upside down, like flies upon a ceiling, so long must effect follow upon cause. So, when the pilgrims of pleasure begin to invade Norway, as they do Switzerland and other lands favoured by Nature, one of her great charms will have ceased to be.

True, the sea will still beat upon her shores with its everlasting refrain, chanting its endless hymn to Nature—a wordless *Memento Mori*, involuntarily recalling to the mind that other sea, into whose turbulent waves each must plunge in the journey of the Dark Valley. The sea will continue to beat upon these shores; the great hills, with their endless undulations, their cloud-capped peaks, will still be fraught with their solemn, chilling, mysterious, yet attracting silence and solitude; the wind will whisper its endless monotones to the pine forests; the cattle “upon a thousand hills”—a true description of this land—will still answer to the jodel cry of the peasant; but the endless stream of travellers, with irritating, restless ways, loud tones, misplaced remarks—the unmeaning laugh and exclamation so often breaking in upon the most solemn grandeur—will mock the dignity of this lonely country, and desecrate its repose.

And its people will change—their characters,

aims, ambitions. It is, I repeat, effect following cause, as surely as the ebb and flow of the tide, the return of the swallows, the succession of the seasons.

And yet it is impossible to go about Norway, and not doubt whether it ever can or will become popular with the great army of invaders. Beyond fishing—an art which appeals to the few and not the many—there is not a very great deal to take them there in comparison with other countries; and there is a great deal *not* there that may be found elsewhere.

The traveller has frequently to give up everything in the shape of comfort and luxuries. He must exert himself, too; often travel under difficulties; go through days of rain and cold, or submit to be detained at some lonely roadside station, where life becomes a burden and man a misanthrope. There is no falling luxuriously into the corner of a comfortably built chariot, and having a nap if drowsiness overtakes you on the road. An upright position and a sharp look-out keep you awake whether you will or not.

In these days, when, if there is no royal road to learning, people like one in travelling—and, more often than not, have it—hardships, and bodily exertion, and, it may sometimes happen, nothing

but a supply of black bread at the end of a long day's journey, to appease a wolfish appetite, are not generally attractive, and will never be universally sought.

Unless, indeed, things change. Things do change; and not always gradually. We often run from one extreme to the other. We cannot say that the world is what it was even twenty years ago. I lately heard, on the same day, two sermons from thoughtful men. The one said we were awaking to a better state of things. The religion of twenty, a hundred, three hundred years past, would not do now. He rejoiced that it was so. The other held an opposite opinion. He considered that in many things religious we were retrograding—going from bad to worse. He mourned over it. Each might be right, but each looked at it from his own point of view. In either case it was clear that things were changing.

Ladies, again, now go up for Cambridge examinations; they make themselves conspicuous and invade man's provinces: talk on platforms and "embrace" professions. Law and physic are open to them—and the Church, as tender lay sisters to attractive curates, who part their hair down the middle, perfume their handkerchiefs, and advise auricular confession. Ladies are quite at home in

the dissecting room—and no doubt very much at home with the students. Probably they will tell you this is only another of their modes of “embracing” a profession. So be it. Yet our wiser forefathers-and-mothers had an old-fashioned idea that a girl's kingdom was her home, her best gifts grace and modesty, her greatest charm a feminine mind. It only remains for ladies, Leap-year or not, to propose to gentlemen. And then, who shall find peace on the earth ?

But at this rate we shall not get through Norway. Digressions, like the poor little muffin bell, ought to be put down by Act of Parliament, for the benefit of the conscientious reader.

It has been stated that the present system of posting in Norway—our chapter reminds us of a sermon that is divided into a number of heads, but does not vary its theme—would never do for an influx of visitors—the Philistines already alluded to. Therefore they had better keep away. There is a certain sound of luxurious dignity about the word “Posting,” quite out of character with the thing itself, as found in Norway. In England it suggests at least a carriage and pair ; a post-boy gorgeous in faded livery, and not infrequently great in self-esteem. In Norway it is a simple little carriole, with one small horse ; rope “ribbons,” which you must handle

yourself; and very often a diminutive post-boy, not yet in his teens by some years, who sits upon your luggage, and, for all you know, is amusing himself by making faces at you behind your back.

The price of posting is about threepence for every English mile. A Norwegian land mile is seven English miles, a fact that must not be forgotten by the traveller. Inexpensive as it sounds, and is, for one or two persons, it mounts up considerably if several are journeying together, and the funds flow from one exchequer. Thus a paterfamilias may be travelling with five animated appendages, say his sisters, cousins, and a female aunt—which does not always mean, in these days, a *feminine* aunt. Or perhaps he is blessed with five well-grown olive-branches. As they must travel with six carriages, the sum amounts to eighteen-pence per English mile; and as, the country being large, many miles have to be traversed, it becomes, in the end, an item not to be passed over in what our old friend Joseph Owen would have described to Bailie Nicol Jarvie as “the sum total of the whole.”

The “stations” are at distances of from seven to ten miles, more or less, from each other. If you are anxious to push on, you must take care to get up early in the morning, so as to be in advance of other people on the road. Even then you may find that

a party of travellers have slept at a station farther



OLD BRIDGE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

on, and stolen a march upon you. In that case you may be detained one, two, three, or even more hours

at many stations. A fast station is bound to keep five horses, a slow station three; therefore, if five people are ahead of you, and all the horses are out, you must await their return.

This is often tedious work. It may be a station surrounded by beautiful scenery, in which you are not unwilling to linger; but it may be the contrary, the station itself comfortless, and destitute even of a glass of milk or beer. Moreover, in travelling, especially in Norway, each day has its appointed work; so many miles and stations for so many days; and the task cannot be accomplished if delays are frequent. Travelling is complicated and troublesome from the fact that you are often timed to catch a steamer at a certain place. As many of these steamers start only once or twice a week, arriving an hour after its departure means a delay of several days, and your plan is, like the world upon occasion, thrown out of joint. True, delays may in some measure be avoided by sending on before you "Forbud"—an avant-courier; but this does not always answer, and it is an additional cost every one does not care to encounter. It may often be noticed, with surprise at the inconsistency of the human mind, how travellers waste considerable sums over worthless objects bought in the shape of so-called "souvenirs," and screw down their necessary ex-

penses to the very last fraction, making themselves perfectly uncomfortable, and certainly not leaving behind them a character for generosity. This is as bad a fault as the lavishness indulged in by Ameri-



ON THE ROAD TO LAERDAL.

cans, and occasionally by the English, which has done so much harm abroad. Extremes are better avoided—a trite but true saying.

And now, en route.

We left Sörum on the Wednesday morning, in company with kind good Mr. and Miss B., who headed the procession; Miss B.'s hood, it has

already been recorded, occasionally swelling out to the resemblance and dimensions of a huge chimney cowl, turned hither and thither by the wind, as she gazed about her. They occupied the stolksjaer, and we followed in carriages. There were two post-boys for the three conveyances. The next station, Lindheian, was at a distance of half a Norwegian mile, or three and a half English miles.

Now began our first experience of Norwegian "posting," their organised systems and way of doing things. It was at first unfamiliar and somewhat incomprehensible. Not speaking the language, we could make no inquiries; and but for Mr. and Miss B., who explained many mysteries, the increase of our knowledge would have been attended by doubts, difficulties, and errors. Yet, like the puzzle of the egg, it is simple enough when once mastered. Our troubles would have arisen chiefly from the fact of starting on a somewhat unbeaten track, where things and people were in all their native simplicity.

Close upon us, to the left of the narrow road, were the grand mountains, covered with trees and tangle, wild flowers and ferns adorning the banks by the wayside. Upon the slopes the wild strawberry plant flourished, for it is very general in Norway, as in many other mountainous countries. Small children wander into the hills and gather the

ripe fruit, and as the traveller passes the little roadside huts, out they come and hold them forth, hoping to tempt him out of a few örer. This and more direct systems of begging, the Government discourage as much as possible.

But the small urchins, little faces and hands stretched forth in mute appeal—often a more eloquent pleading than words—formed a picture hard to be withstood. It was easy enough to pass the fruit—you cannot perform a sort of perambulating picnic in a carriage—but impossible not to satisfy the hope of a slight response shining in those bright eyes, and often very dirty faces. Nevertheless, it is unwise. One well-known village has been half ruined through an Englishman who some little time ago spent a few months there, fishing in the neighbourhood, and amused himself of an evening by throwing örer from his window to the lads in the road, for the doubtful pleasure of seeing them scramble. You cannot visit that place now without being worried by men and boys, who boldly come up and ask you to give them money.

As is often the case, after an early rainy morning, the day was brilliant, and with the freshness of the air our spirits rose to fair-weather point. Mr. B. grew quite youthful and excited, but irritated A. by what the latter looked upon as very slow driving

and frequent pauses. Yet we went over the ground that morning as well as at any after period. A. had yet to learn that four miles an hour is generally the utmost speed to be got out of the horses. Anything much beyond this is immediately checked by the post-boy in the most uncompromising manner.

The love of these people for their horses is a great feature in their character, and a good one. They treat them with tender kindness and consideration, and resent, as far as they dare or can, the slightest approach to ill-treatment. Not that many would be guilty of cruelty; but a stranger to the country is apt to forget the hilly nature of the roads, and that frequent urging would soon put an end to these strong, willing, amiable, little animals; amongst whose faults, however, must be reckoned a general and unpleasant habit of shying.

We passed onwards amidst the mountains, the wild tangles, and the fir trees. To our right ran the noisy river, now near at hand, now winding away, but never quite disappearing. Frothy, rippling, rushing, it seemed a living thing amidst dense solitude. Miss B.'s hood collapsed like a rent balloon, until at last she threw it off altogether, and cast round at us a half-shy, half-amused look, evidently aware that she now presented a more coquettish appearance. Dear lady! harmless vanity was evi-

dently—and properly—not dead in her. It should not be in any one. When not carried to excess it inspires a woman with the wish to please, whence flows the endeavour.

At the end of an hour's drive we reached Lindheian, alighted, entered the station, inspected the rooms upstairs and down, and enjoyed Miss B.'s amusement at the papers on the walls, where extraordinary battles were being for ever fought, guns were continually fired, and great slaughter lay around. Had we passed the night there, according to our original plan, we should doubtless have had nothing to regret. But the scenery around Sörum was finer and more open. Even when night shuts out the mountains, we still feel and know that they are there, and the effect remains.

The people at Lindheian were civil, the landlord especially so. Before the house rose the mountains, and up the slopes went a boy in search of horses. In a short time he brought them down from some invisible recess. The luggage was strapped on to the fresh carriages—we had now one apiece—the post-boys from Sörum were paid and dismissed, and nothing remained but to sign the book.

A day-book is kept at every station. Each traveller, before leaving, or the representative of a

party, is compelled therein to put down every name, and the number of horses engaged. By this means the succeeding party can ascertain how many horses are out, and misrepresentation on the part of the landlord becomes difficult. Some would make excuses if they could, and now and then try it on at



SAETER HOME IN THE MOUNTAINS.

night, in order to detain travellers and make money by them. Complaints against a station may also be recorded in these books, and the *Lensmand*—a sort of official constable or perambulating magistrate—in his appointed rounds, consults the book, takes note of them, and punishes the offenders.

In about twenty minutes from our arrival at Lindheian we were off again. Mr. B. being a Norwegian, could hasten their movements in a

persuasive manner; but after we separated, they kept us waiting often an hour at some of the stations, when in five minutes everything could have been ready. And you are helpless. Offend them by the slightest remonstrance, or the most polite request for a little more speed, and they retaliate by keeping you waiting the longer.

Amongst the healthiest and most praiseworthy features in Norway are the new and excellent roads to be found all over the land, constructed with skill, labour, and cost. In a poor country this is a great work. Over and over again we were astonished at the good roads in hilly passes; roads leading by rushing torrents, overhanging, as it were, the mountain-side, or skirting precipices; rendering smooth and pleasant a journey that would otherwise have been lengthened and laborious.

As we left Lindheian, a cavalcade of four carriages, with one lady to enliven the party, the old road might be traced going up the mountain-side, steep and rugged, making in the old days a toil of pleasure—as all travelling then was in Norway. It was now used as a saeter path, said Mr. B., conducting to the summer homes in the mountains, answering to the Swiss alm, when the cattle are away grazing, and the girls or the young men are looking after them. The saeters are small

rude huts, peat smoked, often blackened inside and out, constructed of logs and planks, and affording sufficient shelter for the warm seasons and the long days.

We bowled along, more figuratively than literally. No sooner did we get up speed, than the short bit



THE BAEGNA.

of down-hill or level road abruptly ceased, and Mr. B. coming to a dead stand at the bottom of the next ascent, would bring up the remainder of the party with a suddenness perilous to an upright position. For the Norwegian horses have this peculiarity, that the first horse regulates the speed, and the others follow suit. If he goes slowly, so do they; if he goes fast, they, too, become more lively.

Each horse will have his nose as close to the carriage in front of him as possible. Now and then, indeed, the advance guard feels a sudden dig in his back, and on looking round is confronted by the animal's mouth, unpleasantly affectionate in its demonstrations. This is troublesome, for whilst the foremost horse has continually to be urged onwards, the other horses require quite as much to be held in. The occupant of the front carriage thus fills an unthankful position. To those following he appears to be a very slow coach indeed; spoiling fun, and dragging onwards in a miserable manner. He is a victim, almost a martyr; his followers constantly urging him on to greater exertions, which are perfectly unavailing. He feels that he is momentarily losing the goodwill of his companions. Four miles an hour is what few men appreciate. It is no better than walking, and really almost as tiring. What they like is to go ahead, and rush through a country. Here is a fall and there a hill; but one fall or one hill very much resembles another, they consider. The only real pleasure in travelling, they argue, is the excitement of passing quickly from place to place, in a sort of race with time.

Unlucky Mr. B. came in that morning for his share of the burden. A., tired at last of the walking

pace and frequent stoppages, declared he would take the lead. Unfortunately, his horse, though it had kept uncomfortably close up, was humble-minded, and absolutely declined a front position. For once A. had to make a virtue of necessity, and practise resignation.

Well he might, for the scene was of beauty uncommon to English eyes. The road wound in and out amongst the hills, which were broken up into long undulating chains; now bleak and bare, and presenting a mere rock surface; now covered with firs that looked fresh and green after the morning rain, less gloomy than usual in the dazzling air and bright sunshine. Those wonderful pine forests, whose sombre aspect makes them so unchangeably grand! Gloomy and sad they may be; there is not the rustle and sparkle about them found in the spreading and more friendly branches of the elm; but they are constant, never changing, ever the same.

During the whole of that ten miles' drive we never met a being or passed a creature, biped or quadruped. Solitude, eternal solitude seemed to reign—utter, uninterrupted solitariness; as much on the road below as on the mountain heights. I had never felt so out of the world, in a sense so cast adrift upon an unknown, uninhabited land, as during

that first day's journeying. There were neither landmarks nor sign-posts to guide us. In a few hours we should have parted company with kind, obliging, sympathetic Mr. and Miss B., and then, thrown on our own resources, we must resign ourselves to whatever destiny might have in store for us.

At length we turned out of the road, to the right, and in a small open space, a hundred yards or so down, came to the station of Storsveen.

I thought, and looking back I still think, this station one of the roughest and most primitive in Norway. Anything more dreary, desolate, and aboriginal could not be conceived. It stood in the midst of this small plain, surrounded by the mountains; no sound save the flowing of the river on its course; no house in sight but the station itself; not even a bird to break the mournful sense of stagnation. We seemed to have reached the end of all things and of the world.

But Mr. B.'s unfailing youthful ardour did not forsake him even here. It was equal to any emergency, and seemed to take things as they came; being, like a second Mark Tapley, most jovial under the severest strain. He sprang lightly out of his carriage, cut a caper in the air to restore suspended circulation, and then came up and asked

us how we found ourselves, what we thought of Storsveen, of carriages, and of all things Norwegian. It was impossible to resist this light-hearted nature, who took everybody under his wing, and had patted all the little boys' heads on the journey from Heen to Sörum. So, stimulated by his good example, we too skipped gracefully out of our carriages, and going up to Miss B., assisted her to unpack and alight from her vehicle. It was delightful to witness the pleasure with which Mr. B. received any attentions paid to his sister—who was just one of those persons to whom it was impossible *not* to be attentive, and even solicitous for her comfort.

Storsveen is not a sleeping station, as far as I know; I may be mistaken. But I do know that I should not like to sleep in the midst of that appalling solitude, as far removed from the world as if one were in the centre of the Great Sahara. Accommodation was of the most limited description. It was past two o'clock, and not a very sumptuous breakfast in the early morning had prepared the way for a healthy appetite. Oh for a dish of that fine trout Miss B. had shown us with such pride at ten o'clock! If we had only known what awaited us!—If only in this life we could always see the end from the beginning, and foretell the future!—how much good would be done, what mistakes avoided! But

we could not see even a day before us, and so the trout were left in peace at Sörum. Here we found nothing forthcoming but a supply of black bread, goat's cheese, and some not especially good beer. Upon asking for further supplies, the mistress of the establishment looked vacantly at us, then mysteriously whispered to her husband, and finally shook her head in a melancholy way. Evidently, to ask and to have was by no means the rule of the house.

Black bread is of two kinds in Norway. There is one sort brown, sour, and not altogether unpalatable; and there is a stage farther on, to which limit English appetite at any rate cannot extend. A. managed neither one nor the other, and throughout Norway eked out a bare existence upon hard biscuit. As for goat's cheese, here and in other parts of Norway it looked and smelt exactly like hard brown soap. I never had the courage to taste it. Miss B., whose capacities for fasting seemed unlimited, refused anything in the way of refreshment; necessity compelled us to be less dainty.

The house, as all these stations are, was built of wood. We entered a rough long room, almost bare of furniture, and chilling, and found the day-book. The kitchen to the right was strewn with

green branches of trees—a frequent custom in Norway—that sent forth a sweet, resinous perfume. In the large chimney-corner, to the left as we entered, a rough, stalwart handmaiden was boiling something in a cauldron—what, we stayed not to inquire. In this out-of-the-world spot it was as well not to be too inquisitive.

Above the outhouse to the right of the main building was a small bell-tower or shed, and the bell is principally used to call the people down from the mountains. The tones vibrate through the air and penetrate to distant parts of the hills, sounding an alarm sufficient to arouse from their long sleep those who are quietly resting after the burden and heat of their little day in the churchyard hard by. Not that the bell was a large one, but in these quiet neighbourhoods, these great solitudes, sounds are tenfold magnified.

The people of the station, to be just, were better than their quarters, anxious to do their utmost during our short stay amongst them. But you cannot make bricks without straw, and what they did not possess, the best will in the world was unable to produce. So, with neither time, inclination, nor inducement to linger, we got ready again for the road. We had still far to travel, and at our

present rate it was difficult to say at what hour we should reach our destination. One thing, however, we had already learned, that the system of travelling in Norway was never made for those who are pressed for time.

So we paid the post-boys from Lindheian, watched them depart with their empty carriages, and prepared to follow suit. We left the kitchen with its pleasant smell of pine-wood and fir cones, and the girl who had never moved from her mysterious ministrations at the cauldron, swallowed a little of their black bread and beer, and went out. Mr. B. superintended the strapping the luggage, about which he was as anxious as a lady is for the safe keeping of her bonnet-box ; made them encase our portmanteau in a sack to protect it from the mud on the road ; and away we went on our journey.

We had seven miles to travel to the next station, Vold—seven miles of the same fine scenery, the same grand, utter solitude, the vast hills and lonely mountain heights ; and then, after nearly two hours, another stage was accomplished.

Vold, very differently situated from Storsveen, was perched by the roadside in a mountain nook, surrounded and overhung by the trees and wild shrubs that grew upon the slopes. There was a close feeling about it of being shut in ; a want of

air; a longing to get out into more expansive quarters. The house, built something after the style of a Swiss *châlet*, was picturesque, and we entered by the gable end. The spot seemed to breathe an air of mystery, which no doubt was all imagination, but had the effect of reality upon nerves beginning to get jaded with the long, unfamiliar drive, the slow progress, the want of ordinary food. It would have been difficult to stay the night in that place, and we heartily responded to Mr. B.'s proposal not to linger here longer than was necessary. Time was precious; our journey was far from being over for the day; horses and carriages could be ready at once, whilst to prepare dinner would take an hour. So again we made martyrs of ourselves, and went on our way—fasting.

Once more, therefore, and for the last time all together, we started. The road was more wild and picturesque than ever. The Baegna now went rushing and roaring in turbulent haste and strong force over its rocky bed, deepening as the road ascended. Trees overhung us; masses of tangle, slopes of wild flowers, and the delicate green of the oak-fern continued to abound. Rugged grandeur on all sides. In about a quarter of an hour we reached the bridge over the Baegna,

where we were to part with our kind friends. Our road would now lie to the left; theirs onwards to the right. Miss B. was on her way to spend a month or two with friends, who—it seemed to us—must live at the very ends of the earth; and Mr. B., leaving his sister in safe keeping, would continue



A NORWEGIAN TRAVELLING BY CARRIOLE.

his journey to Bergen. There he hoped we should meet again.

It chanced that we never did meet again. And here, in taking leave of them, though these pages may not come under their notice, I would gratefully acknowledge their kindness and consideration towards two travellers in a strange land, and what was still more embarrassing, in the midst of an unknown tongue. So far they had

made all the difference to our journey; future progress would be comparatively plain sailing.

We fell, too, soon after this, into the more beaten tracks of travellers, where complications need not be; where the station people often spoke a little English; and travellers' wants were so much alike that without being uttered they were understood. But so desolate and forlorn, so out of the way and out of the world, so leading to chaos and confusion seemed that first day's experience, that unsupported by Mr. B.'s kindly guidance, and Miss B.'s bright countenance to enliven and relieve these apparently untrodden paths, we might not have had the courage to proceed. Untrodden paths indeed! From eleven in the morning until five in the afternoon, when we parted, we passed no creature on the road, heard no sound of voices save our own, saw no sign of life, with the exception of the slight breaks at the stations, and the few people inhabiting them.

We parted from our friends at five o'clock, at the foot of the Baegna Bridge, through which the water was rushing with passionate haste and loud noise, foam upon foam. Mr. B. was full of farewells, and shook hands at least a dozen different times, and Miss B. waved her hand and occasionally looked back until quite out of sight. Everything

about her was gentle ; voice, step, movement, and expression ; and this, added to what must once have been considerable beauty, and was beauty still, made one wonder why, in the years gone by, she had not ceased to be an unappropriated blessing.

So they departed, and we saw them no more. I had like to have taken leave of Norway and of life at the same time. Nothing would satisfy my horse but that he must follow the carriages containing our lost companions. Endeavours to make him take the proper road were useless. He backed, plunged, reared, turned round, and was within an inch of precipitating himself and his driver over the steep banks into the rushing water below. For one moment I realised the feeling of a near and overwhelming danger ; my heart stood still ; and, luckily, so did the horse. Then his mind took a sudden turn for the better ; he put his head down and plunged to the left—the left road proving the right road in this instance, though it is not always so through life. Away he dashed, and A.'s quadruped came trotting after. We might have compared ourselves to the Children in the Wood—children of a larger growth, it is true—but here were forests innumerable, if not the leaves and the robins ; whilst those unhappy little beings, whose fate has rent the

heart and harrowed the feelings of childhood from generation to generation, could not have found themselves in greater solitude and a more forsaken country than now surrounded us on all sides.

CHAPTER IV.

FRYDENLUND — FAGERNAES — REIEN — STEE — OILÖ — TUNE —
SKOGSTAD — NYSTUEN — MARISTUEN — HAEG — HUSUM —
BLAAFLATEN — LAERDALSOREN.

NORWAY may certainly be described as a very irregular country. Not in the matter of its morals, which, I believe, are unexceptionable, but in its physical aspect. Long stretches of flat, level roads are almost unknown; and the great upheavals of Nature, which we call mountains, are well-nigh as diversified in outline at their base as at their summit. The roads undulate; now in gentle lines, which seem to serve no other purpose than to give the horse an excuse for crawling, and of which he makes the most—now suddenly rising in steep ascents, requiring both fortitude and perseverance to scale.

We parted from Mr. and Miss B. at the foot of Baegna Bridge, after handshakes increased and multiplied on the part of Mr. B., who alighted from his carriage, and danced a species of war-dance

in the road, as he capered from one carriage to another showering down upon us the while all kinds of good wishes for our future happiness and prosperity in Norway, and handwaves and kindly glances from his sister. The angle of the road at



BETWEEN TUNE AND SKOGSTAD.

length took them from view, and we saw them no more.

We now began the ascent of a winding mountain path, steep and long—the ascent of the Jukamsklev. The road had been cleared out of the mountain in zigzags, and the scenery as we went upwards, was of untold beauty. We obtained grand views of the rushing torrent, and as we mounted high and

higher, our gaze seemed carried into precipitous depths. Not far from here is the church of Lom, dating back to the thirteenth century, built of resinous pine wood, in the Byzantine style, and tarred over from time to time until the wood has become hard as iron, and almost imperishable. But we had no time to visit it; what had still to be done admitted of no delay on the road. The shadows were lengthening, and that peculiar look was creeping over the sky, which announces as surely as a sundial the decline of day.

It was now my turn to receive the burden of leadership; and though perfectly helpless and innocent, I soon felt myself a miserable culprit. Do what I would, my horse would not go beyond a snail's pace; he did not even walk, but crawled. In truth it was difficult to wish him to do anything more lively up this tremendous ascent. But hungry and weary—I cannot conclude a harrowing picture by adding footsore—it was no doubt exasperating to A., whose animal, with the perverseness of Norwegian horses, required as much holding in as mine did urging. Yet the affliction had to be endured; for my own part heroically, for at every turn fresh beauties disclosed themselves, or old ones showed up in a new aspect. Pine-clad hills; a view more and more extended as we neared

the summit ; a rushing torrent below, into which we could look as into a shuddering depth by simply leaning to the left and gazing at the living, leaping foam. To our right, trees clothed the mountain, and the eye wandered up into the depths of tangle and briar, the slanting shadows thrown by the sun, the gloom beyond, into which no sight could penetrate. Ahead of us we saw but a short distance, so abrupt and steep were the windings ; thus the pleasures of hope—that every turn would prove the last—accompanied us on our way.

The summit at last, and a magnificent view of mountain ranges, range upon range, snow-hills in the distance, far as the eye could reach. Below stretched the great valley, plains, and villages ; lakes opening out, on which small islands and trees found their haven, and ducks disported themselves. This Valley of Valders is one of the grandest and most extended views in Norway, with its vast range, its far-away snow-capped mountains, its repose and solemn solitude. And now the mountain we had just ascended seemed literally to laugh at us, for no sooner had we gained the summit on the one side than we had to commence a descent upon the other. Down we went by the same winding process—zigzag paths, cut and cleared out of the mountain. But if we had ascended deliberately, we

came down at a speed which had in it a mixture of compensation, recklessness and exhilaration, at once delightful and renovating. In the far distance we could just see the snow-mountains of Jotunheim, and passed on as quickly as possible to the next station, Frydenlund. This was ten and a half miles from the last station, Vold, and we had been three hours accomplishing the distance.

Frydenlund seemed, by comparison, a civilised and decent station ; and we found that by waiting half an hour we could be served with a sumptuous repast—also by comparison. A lad belonging to the station, the son of the hostess, spoke just enough English to understand our requests—very humbly preferred on our part, for hunger as well as conscience makes cowards of us all. In a short time we found ourselves in Elysium, though not exactly revelling in nectar and ambrosia ; and certainly not on Olympus, since we were in the valley.

It is an important village, as villages go in Norway, possessing a staff of judicial dignitaries, including the Foged, or chief administrative official ; the Sorenskriver, or local judge ; and the Lensmand, the chief constable already alluded to, who pays periodical visits to the different stations in the district, inspects the day-books, and comes down

upon all sorts of offenders with the strong arm of the law. The reader will not be surprised to hear, after this, that the district prison is not very far off. It is a large white building, so gloriously situated, so clean and orderly, that captivity within its walls should be looked upon as happiness rather than punishment.

Our banquet-room was large, and for a station luxurious. Plants flourished in the windows and on the floor: great fuchsias and gorgeous geraniums, whose leaves threw out a subtle and delicious perfume. Excepting the wild flowers of the woods, our eyes had become strangers to floral beauties of any sort, and these threw quite a glory into the room, and turned it into a small paradise. A view fit for paradise, too, was that to be seen from the windows. The village in the plain; the long valley; the lakes studded with their small islands and waving trees; the opposite mountains, stretching away far as the eye could trace, down which ran great waterfalls; the deep clefts, where sight was lost in the blackness of night. All this we noted with delight, as soon as we had eyes and thoughts for the beautiful. For if, according to the French proverb, "*Ventre affâmé n'a point d'oreilles*" it is equally true that under similar conditions it is no more possible to appreciate the beauties of nature

than to listen to the strains of music or the charms of oratory.

Yet contrary opinions have been held. I remember a lady once saying that she should like to live on crystallised orange-blossoms (we were sitting down to supper, and some of the dainty confection was upon the table). The food was *so* poetical ; anything less refined destroyed all that was æsthetical in one's nature. A gentleman opposite—whose name was then, and is now, in the first rank of poets—took up her remark, and said very decidedly that he thought a good leg of mutton far more to the purpose, and for his part preferred it. The lady opened her round eyes in horror, and then closed them in faintness, at such a want of the poetical from so unexpected a quarter ; and she whispered me that none of her family ever saw her eat ; it was too vulgar, too gross and unspiritualising ; all *that* was done in the privacy of her own room.

This same lady, later in the evening, informed me that she thought the most delightful thing in the world must be to fly across the desert on the back of a dromedary—though why she preferred a dromedary to a camel she did not stay to explain. The feeling of unlimited space was *so* poetical—she was again among the poets—the sensation of fleeing

from the vulgar herd of mankind was so soul-soaring in its influence ! Here she landed me out of my depth ; understanding collapsed, and only returned in time to see the lady disappearing from sight in a cloud ; but when fully aroused to consciousness, I found the cloud was only of Shetland manufacture. And though Shetland may be the end of the earth, we have no reason whatever for supposing that it is the end nearest heaven.

One more station had to be reached that night, and darkness was creeping on apace as we started on our last stage. We ascended the long hill, and gradually rose far above the valley, which lay sleeping below us, with the village, the lakes, and the small islands. Across one of the lakes a boat was darting, sculled by a boy, and so far off it seemed, so tiny, that until glasses were brought to bear, we took it to be a swan sailing majestically away to its home. Everything was growing indistinct, and the far-off snow mountains were now invisible. Beside us the hills rose as far above the road to the right, as the valley was below us on the left. Cataracts ran down the sides and could be heard "making music"—very lovely music it was—when no longer seen, or only to be dimly traced in the gathering gloom ; white, silvery threads, writhing and twisting like things of life,

standing out in contrast with the blackness of the trees, the dark surface of the mountains.

At about half-past ten at night, after twelve hours' almost incessant travelling, the post-boy with his peculiar twang—the sing-song tone of the Norwegians—cried out, “Fagernaes!” a sound as welcome as June roses, and pointed to something ahead that could only be faintly seen in the darkness. Sombre pines were about us, wrapped in the silence and mystery of the hour. Out of these we turned through a wide gate into an open space, the house loomed up before us, and in a few moments we were at anchor.

The landlord was at once at the door, and welcomed us hospitably. The building possessed quite the dignity of a small hotel; rough as regarded the staircase and sleeping-rooms, but not without pretensions, and luxurious in comparison with our late experiences. The landlord, as he conducted us to our bedrooms, informed us in very good English that we had the house to ourselves, with the exception of three Dutchmen. Terrible exception, indeed, though we knew it not then. You think at once, discerning reader, that we were robbed or murdered by these Dutchmen, but you are wrong. They were only off before us the next morning, and during the remainder of that week were ahead of us on the road, taking up horses and carriages, devouring

everything before them like an army of locusts, and behaving to every one they met with scant courtesy. In the end, every one voted them a perfect nuisance, and a disgrace to their country.

If any one wishes to know what it is to have a night of sound, refreshing sleep, let him take as a prescription twelve hours' carriage travelling in Norway. The remedy is unfailing.

At the breakfast-table, the next morning, the host informed us that the three Dutchmen had been gone about an hour, and we failed to realise the importance of this apparently commonplace announcement. A pretty and quite refined-looking young woman waited upon us. I have never seen any one who did this with such extraordinary quietness. She moved about with no more noise than a cat; until A. declared she gave him an uncanny, creepy feeling, that was positively unpleasant. We were exercised in our minds as to whether she was the landlord's wife or sister, and came at last to the conclusion that she must be the former. But, like many others who come to conclusions, we may have been mistaken.

This house, once the station, is no longer so. The station, *Fagerlund*, is a hundred yards farther up the road, and also accommodates travellers: our inn was *Fagernaes*, a favourite resort in summer, and

often full of visitors. Beautifully situated on the borders of the lake, our host informed us that it furnishes excellent trout-fishing, and wild-duck shooting. The surrounding views for many a long mile are charming, and for this alone a few days or a week might be pleasantly spent here. Small islands enlivened the water, and graceful willows hung pensively over the banks. At Fagernaes, the rough and the wild in Norwegian scenery had given place to the sentimental and the refined.

The whole of that day's journey was a succession of beautiful scenes, varying in character from the sublime and the severe to the quiet and unemotional. Now passing a wayside village or solitary cottage, out of which the dogs sprang barking with a furious noise that made us thankful for their scarcity in Norway. The few villagers—men with short jackets, gay waistcoats, and hats like sugar-cones—stopped their work to gaze after the wayfarers, with less curiosity no doubt than in days gone by. Now we passed through long avenues of trees, that shut out the broad sunlight, and threw slanting shadows athwart our path. Still the road undulated, like the long rollers of an Atlantic sea, and one could almost imagine that here the ocean had once found its home. To our left were the calm waters of the Strande Fjord; but here and there the calmness was turned to a

rushing torrent which leaped down many feet in white, seething foam, breaking over huge boulders, and forcing its way through crevices in countless small cataracts, turning mill-wheels, and giving work to men whose lives in these sublime scenes of nature should be inspired with a like grandeur of thought and sentiment. Only we know how long familiarity with beauty takes from its influence ; the eyes seem to be withheld, until an interruption or an absence restores the magic with the return.

Throughout the day grand mountains were about us. Now vast pine forests fringed the summits and stood out like some delicate fretwork of nature against the clear blue background ; and now the clear-cut outlines of barren hills cut the sky sharply in twain. The first station we came to was Reien, against which we shall have a dark record in time and place. Here we were in the neighbourhood of the Jotunheim, the highest mountains in Norway ; and excursions lasting over a week may be made by those who love the excitement of danger, and are indifferent to fatigue.

Half-way between Reien and Stee we passed, high up on the hill-side, a comfortable-looking hotel, so beautifully situated that the very sight of it left a longing to go back some day and spend a month there, exploring the lovely neighbourhood, seeking

out the reindeer, and passing whole days in trout-fishing and wild-duck shooting.

After Stee came Oilö, on the slope of the mountains. The fat, good-natured landlady bustled out and patted our horses, and lamented that we had driven them too fast. This was evidently her weak point, about which she had hallucinations. We had travelled at the rate of about three miles an hour, and the little horses were as fresh as when they started. In less than ten minutes we were off again from Oilö, but not before the good woman had affectionately hugged her cattle, kissed them on both cheeks, and commended them to our tender care.

Much of the road between Oilö and the next station, Tune, was cut out of the solid rock, and bordered the lake, whose deep, dark waters looked cold and repelling. Every now and then a sharp angle in the road confronted us with a solid mass of rock, which, concealing the way, seemed to bar all farther progress save a descent into the water. Occasionally we passed through short tunnels, blasted out of the stone, that suddenly transported us from the heat of the sun to a cold dripping atmosphere, from which we were glad to escape.

After a drive of about six miles through such scenery we reached Tune, a station celebrated all over Norway from the fact of its owner being a

Member of Parliament—and by no means an inactive one. We turned off the road up a steep narrow lane, all ruts and stones, and at a distance of some two hundred yards came to the house. Tune, himself, was away, perhaps looking after his parliamentary duties, and the place seemed to be in charge of



NEAR FAGERNAES.

women folk. The first sight to greet us was that of the three Dutchmen, who had taken possession of the whole room, chairs, tables, and couches, but who departed five minutes after our entrance, having, during that time, behaved with as much indirect rudeness as could be condensed into the moments. They went off with the only available carriages in the place, exulting aloud at the manner in which

they had left those who would follow after to less good fortune than their own.

The serving woman, a good-looking, middle-aged maiden, was wonderfully attentive, pressed all kinds of delicacies upon us, was distressed that we did not make an end of everything, and charged us very moderately at the last. As a return for so much attention and friendly feeling, we offered her on our departure a gratuity which we thought only too small, but which she considered so out of proportion to her due, that in the humblest and most grateful manner she tendered us back a portion thereof. How many would possess this tender conscience in more civilised parts of the world?

Some weeks later on, when we again visited the station, the woman at once recognised us, and greeted us as old friends. A beaming smile lit up her comely face; she hastened to the day-book, found our names all those weeks back, and pointed to them triumphantly. Then she turned to the Dutchmen's signatures, just above our own, with a face and a gesture expressive of dislike and contempt. The landlord himself was at home on that second occasion; was very obliging, and pretended to be nothing more than he really was. At home, to his guests at any rate, he was evidently not the Member of Parliament, but simply the master of the

station. He spoke English fairly well, and begged us to return later on in the year, and bring a party with us, if possible, to shoot bears, which were a nuisance to the neighbourhood. Capital sport might be had, and he would do his best to make us comfortable. But this is dating forward.

The carriages were out, and we had to put up with a *stolkjaer*, to our sorrow, for the next stage was one of twelve miles. The scenery was now wild and rugged, the road a wonderful piece of engineering skill, patience, and labour, cut out of the solid rock, and skirting the edge of the lake. Again we occasionally passed through a tunnel, and here and there, where small cataracts ran down the mountain-side, a long wooden shed was erected, to cover the road, protect the traveller, and conduct the waterfall into the lake. But the drops filtered through, and these little diversions were so many shower-baths; refreshing, perhaps, but not agreeable.

In one place, the road took a sharp turn to the left, the waters narrowed into a small channel, on either side rose huge perpendicular mountains of rock, of towering height and frowning aspect, absolutely bare of the slightest verdure. Then, as the road turned, the lake opened out, basin-like, grand hills developed themselves, and threw their

shadows upon the dark water. The effect of all this was heightened by the utter solitude of the whole district—travelling mile after mile, hour after hour, in the midst of such scenes, yet never meeting a creature ; the solitude unbroken even by the flight of a bird. Here, indeed, eagles might make their homes, unmolested by man, and wing their flight from peak to peak, as safe as in a desert. The road was so narrow in parts, that the edge was bordered by railings of pine wood, strong and massive.

Soon after this we began to ascend, and at length, crossing a long wooden bridge to our right, found ourselves at Skogstad. Bennett had given us a stage farther on for that day, but it was late ; the three Flying-Dutchmen were ahead with the horses, and the landlord said it would take some time to get others down from the hills. On our part, we were glad of an excuse for cutting short the journey, and remaining there the night. The station is grandly situated in the midst of the gloomy, yet beautiful mountains, the stream ever rushing through the valley.

The civil landlord spoke excellent English, but raised our compassion and keenest sympathies. We presently heard in the house-place below, a shrew laying down the law, and elevating her voice

with a harsh sound, that penetrated to the very centre of one's nerves. If ever man was hen-pecked, it was the unhappy lord and master of that voice—as it seemed to us. Let us hope we were mistaken; but it is difficult to disbelieve the evidence of one's senses. Solomon has said, the rod for the child—he is silent about the wife—and we would not for a moment have it supposed that we encourage such an idea, or offer it for general consideration; but in this instance, had we found the man taming the shrew with the aid of a broomstick, we should not have died of grief, or even blushed for our sex. After all, the line must be drawn somewhere, and human sympathies have their limits.

Our host was tall, meek, and pale-faced; what force of character he once possessed had evidently long since frightened itself away. Why will men for ever go on making these mistakes—the dove mating with the eagle, the wolf with the lamb, and other incongruities and incompatibilities too numerous to mention? Is it because, as Pope says, “Man never is, but always to be blest?” In such cases, does it not come to something very near the opposite? We afterwards learned that this woman, when the fit took her, would stir neither hand nor foot for the benefit of the visitors.

The next morning nothing better than black bread and bad coffee were forthcoming for breakfast, no doubt because the virago had not recovered her amiability. Nevertheless, we were glad to have stopped the night at Skogstad, and should do it again if ever we passed that way. In situation it is far more beautiful than Nystuen, the next station, and it possesses a new, good-sized, comfortable building, which the enterprising landlord has erected for the accommodation of travellers. Consequently he was worthy of encouragement as well as sympathy.

So we started once more on our journey. The road to Nystuen was steep, continuous, and long. Here the ascent to the Fille-Fjeld commenced. Vegetation became more barren and stunted the higher we climbed, the fir trees, of which we had had so many, giving place to the birch and mountain willow. We were nearly two hours and a half reaching Nystuen, a distance of about ten miles. This station lies between the hills, 3300 feet above the level of the sea; so exposed to the storms and gales of winter, that the buildings have had to be erected parallel with the sides of the valley, their gables running west and east, whence come the most violent hurricanes; otherwise they would never stand the fury of the elements.

The outlook from Nystuen is dreary and desolate, but the station is often full in summer. Snow hills were around us, and in the plain a small lake—the Utza Vand—celebrated for its trout, but cold, and dismal-looking. The ice, they told us, had only lately disappeared from the surface. Here we stayed only long enough to give our horses a rest; for the post-boy, who seemed to have taken a fancy to us, begged to accompany us farther on our way. A little beyond this, we came to the source of the Laera. From this point the stream accompanied us to the end of our journey, swelling at times into a rushing mighty torrent, falling in huge cataracts, with a noise like the sound of many waters, again subsiding into a more tranquil mood, but always swiftly flowing.

From Nystuen we followed the level of the plateau, until a sharp picturesque descent landed us at Maristuen. Here grand excursions can be made to the top of some of the mountains, by those interested in feats of this description. From the height of one of them it has been said a hundred glaciers may be seen. Our next stage, Haeg, brought us 1500 feet nearer the level of the sea. The descent, winding about the mountains, opened up in passes leading to other districts, through picturesque glens covered with wild flowers and

ferns. The rushing, noisy Laera was our constant companion. Vegetation grew more luxuriant and more beautiful.

At Haeg we entered the valley of the Laera, one of the most glorious in Norway. Between this station and Husum stands the ancient church



CHURCH OF BORGUND.

of Borgund, a fantastic edifice dating from the twelfth century, surmounted by dragons' heads, the timber black with age. Beside it stood an old belfry containing three bells, never rung for fear the whole concern should come down. A lych gate was at either end of the churchyard. Tar and age have blackened the church, which was bought some time ago by the Antiquarian Society of Christiania. Both the interior and exterior of the church are

curious and interesting. A passage like a small cloister runs round the outside ; the portal is elaborately ornamented with entwined snakes, and the key that opens the great door, with its Runic inscription, is as old and curious as the church itself. Not less quaint is the interior, with its great wooden pillars, and curious old wood-carving. With strange ill-judgment a new church has been erected near the old one ; out of harmony with the old building, taking from its dignity and solitary state, and destroying some of the romance of one of the grandest, wildest, and loveliest spots in Norway.

Mountains in great masses fell away, opening up huge clefts and passes. Below the church, in a narrow defile between high rocks, rushed the river Laera, foaming, roaring, seething with wild force ; defying all obstacles in its turbulent path. The old road leading over the steep hills to the right had to be followed ; there had been a landslip on the new road, which, for the present, was impassable. The ravine leading beside the new road is sublime, wild and grand to the last extremity, but it was not to-day that we saw it.

Passing the church, ascending the steep hill, and winding round, we once more descended into the valley, and found ourselves at Husum.

We had not changed horses or carriages since



NEAR HUSUM.

leaving Skogstad, six hours ago, and had lost very little time on the road; yet the horses seemed

as fresh at the end as at the beginning of the journey. The post-boy, a little, strong, well-made mountaineer, about twenty years old, full of fire and energy and muscular development, scrambled like a cat up the mountain sides after the wild flowers, laughed and talked incessantly, displayed



HUSUM.

his small stock of English, and made himself understood somehow—a fair, Saxon-looking man. Dressed in a short blue jacket, knee-breeches, and brigand hat, he harmonised well with the scenery. Towards the end he took up the guide-book, and with a familiarity in which there was nothing offensive—so unconscious was it, so simple and frank was the fellow, so fresh, open, and genuine his

ruddy face and clear wide-open blue eyes—he pitched upon the phrases at the end, and reading the Norwegian, with great perseverance caught up the accent of the English translations, which he learnt off by heart as they were repeated to him. At Husum he declared that he must go no farther ; so we settled our money matters, and, according to the universal system in Norway, he returned us a hand-grasp that would have done honour to Hercules himself. I can yet feel the honest fellow's expression of good-fellowship. We made him happy with what, to him, was a good dinner, over and above his “drikke penge,” and as we had now to wait, whether we would or no, ordered refreshment for ourselves also.

Husum is perhaps more grandly situated than any other station between Sörum and Laerdal. The stream rushes through the narrow defile with tremendous speed, thundering over its rocky bed, foaming over great boulders, and reducing all obstacles in the course of time. Immediately before the station it has a fall of many feet—an immense volume of frothy, seething water, tumbling into a perfect whirlpool of rage and fury ; hurling itself over at express speed and with terrible strength ; casting around showers of spray, and ascending in white steamy mist. The noise was so tremendous

that when close upon it we could not hear each other speak. But to look over from the edge, and watch the power of the inexhaustible torrent, was to lay oneself under the influence of a sublime emotion. The rocks, here contracted into a narrow opening, concentrated the strength and speed of the rushing torrent into tenfold power.

Surrounding us on all sides were the mountains—barren to the very summit, cut and jagged, lined and wrinkled, as if with the burden of the ages. Others clothed with furze and pine trees, with sprinklings of ferns and wild flowers; mountains opposing each other, and trees whispering their secrets, as in centuries past, when the waters were rushing onwards to the sea just as they were to-day; as they will be when our turn has come, and we have given place to a generation of men and women who will know greater secrets than we do, and make grander discoveries.

We started on our way to Blaaflaten; the beaming face of our late post-boy coming in as a last impression, as he wished us a “good journey,” and gazed after us half-wistfully down the road, as if he almost repented staying behind. The grandeur of the pass was undiminished, the road being often cut out of the rock and overhanging the rushing torrent, with nothing but the pine fences to protect

the traveller. Then all this passed away in a rapid descent that landed us in a broad valley, luxuriant and fertile compared with that we had just passed through.

After Blaaflaten we entered upon our last stage, and were not sorry to see the end at hand. Twelve or fourteen hours a day was proving almost too much of a good thing; and yet I think we were less tired now than at the end of the first day's work. The novel mode of travelling; the ever-varying scenery; the fresh, sparkling air; the restful if somewhat monotonous solitude—all tended to keep up excitement and interest; whilst a well-earned, sound rest each night, went far to restore the flagging energies of the previous day.

Soon after leaving Blaaflaten we came by the mountain side upon the first wild rose-bush I had seen for many a long day—a sight to bring a rush of home memories to the mind, and conjure up, as by magic, scenes long gone by. Recollections of early days and hours that are the happiest in life if we only knew it, and come not twice to any man; memories veiled by the sober realities of after life, until a flower, a scent, a song, a chime, it may be a page in an old book, or a letter, yellow with age, traced by a well-loved hand, suddenly draws aside the curtain with unsparing haste, and brings back

the past with an emotion that is at once the keenest pleasure and pain. The remembrance of days when sorrow and regrets are unknown ; when life is not disillusioned, and robbed of that charm—an uncertain future ; when its aspirations and rose-coloured dreams, that fade so soon never to return, are still things of sense and touch ; when the lesson has yet to be learnt that man's heritage is care, and his best happiness must lie in earnest work.

It took but a moment to stop the carriage and gather some of the blossoms, that were full of the homely scent of the dog-roses in our own country lanes. At once an invisible link stretched across the great space dividing the two nations, and brought them for the moment into tender harmony with each other.

But we have not time to moralise now, as we had not then to linger. The mountains fell away, the valley widened, the stream expanded ; about ten o'clock at night we reached Laerdalsören, and with it the end of our journey.

Early the next morning we were to take a boat with three strong rowers, and cross a portion of the Sogne Fjord to Aardal, on our road to the Vettifos.

CHAPTER V.

LAERDALSÖREN—THE SOGNE FJORD—AARDAL—JENS
KLINGENBERG—THE VETTIFOS.

LAERDALSÖREN, at the head of the Sogne Fjord, is quite an important little town for Norway; in England it would be thought little more than a village. Its aspect is that of a hamlet surrounded by high mountains, which press so closely on the one side that a sense of suffocation quickly follows upon arrival, and a sojourn of several days becomes almost intolerable. Few people stay beyond one night, so that a constant stream of visitors is in motion. A small stream, it is true, since Norway is amongst the comparatively unvisited countries of the earth. Nevertheless, it is so by comparison only. As a matter of fact, during the few available months of the year, Norway finds its worshippers, and they are as many as need be.

Laerdalsören, or Laerdal, as it is indifferently called, has some 800 inhabitants. A quaint old-fashioned place, the houses all built of wood; one

straggling street, long and narrow, with small byways leading to the cottages and huts facing the fjord; tenements, some of them, that look ancient and in the last stage of consumption, for the most part inhabited by the fishermen of the district. Beyond these settlements the grand



ON THE ROAD TO LAERDAL.

waters of the Sogne Fjord open out. On either side rise the mountains, massive and frowning, full of majesty and splendour. Gazing on these, impatience seizes upon you to quit the small, confined village, launch out upon those waters, round those great bulwarks of nature, and make acquaintance with what lies beyond.

Yet I doubt whether this was precisely our case

the night we reached Laerdal. Our four days' incessant journeying had been full of novelty and enjoyment; but the truth of the old saying, "Be moderate in all things," is not to be disputed. We had descended lower and lower into the valley, until the mountains expanded and the stream widened and yielded up its life to the fjord, and found ourselves in the plain, on a level with the far-off sea: for the Sogne Fjord stretches 120 miles up into the land.

We soon reached the church and the first of the straggling houses forming the town; passed the post and telegraph office—a welcome sight in these remote parts, as a connecting link with civilisation—and in a few moments were at Lindström's hotel, and in clover. Our present quarters were luxurious. A well-furnished double sitting-room containing a fine-toned piano; and beyond, a dining-room—supplied with white bread! When A. caught sight of the latter—we had seen none since leaving Christiania—I trembled for his digestion, for the day of reckoning, for the task that lay before the bread maker.

The landlord spoke tolerable English; better perhaps than he understood it; for he often misinterpreted what was said, and had an uncomfortable way of answering Yes, or No, at random; trusting to

chance to be right or wrong, and, of course, seldom with a happy result. A slight but rather amusing incident proved how easily people may blunder who do not understand each other.

It was necessary to arrange for a boat to take us next morning to Aardal, but the landlord had disappeared. In the passage was a stout old dame, the landlord's mother, who knew not a word of English. In answer to a request for her son, she placed her arms akimbo, fell a-musing for a moment, and then departing as fast as her size permitted, brought back in triumph a tobacco-jar. An interesting object, but not exactly what was then required.

She was much amused at what she now saw was a misapprehension, and her fat sides shook with laughter. The request was repeated, and the owner of the place further indicated by signs as well as words. Light broke upon her.

"A—h! Ja! ja! Now she knew!" Disappearing through a doorway—Nature forced her to take it sideways, like a crab—she returned in a twinkling, out of breath, but full of self-congratulation at her intelligence, and presented us with a matchbox and a sounding "Vor so got!"

We gave up in despair, but, not to damp her ardour, accepted the article. Almost at the same

moment the landlord reappeared, our wants were made known, the difficulty was over. He soon informed us that a boat and three rowers would be at our disposal at eight o'clock the next morning. It was at least a four hours' row to Aardal.

Remembering the late passage-at-arms with the old lady, I inquired of Herr Lindström the Norwegian word for Landlord. He misunderstood the question, thought I asked for the name of the landlord at Aardal, and replied, "Klingenberg."

"Klingenberg!" I returned, wondering what could be its derivation. "A strange word for landlord."

"Very strange," answered Herr Lindström, looking as if he thought the strangeness all on my side. But, never doubting, I accepted the lesson. This, too, presently gave rise to sundry cross questions and crooked answers.

The rugged mountains, so close to the inn, seemed to overshadow and crush it. Several waterfalls trickled down the sides immediately before us, small silvery threads, making music as they ran—rather too much music when it came to the silent hours of the night. Happily the next morning arrived only too soon. But with the excitement of new scenes energy revived. At eight o'clock the boatmen were at the inn door, and we started on our way to the

Vettifos, one of the great waterfalls and wonders of Norway. It goes under different names — the Vettifos, the Vettisfos, the Mörkfos, and the Mörka-vettisfos.

We passed down the straggling street, found the boat at the shores of the fjord, and were soon out upon the deep waters. The men, knowing what was before them, began, continued, and ended their work in a calm, leisurely manner, slightly taxing the patience. Yet we made way. By slow and sure degrees Laerdal grew less distinct, until it looked no more than a small colony of fishermen's huts at the head of the fjord ; a handful of tenements dwarfed to the size of toy houses and Noah's arks by the surrounding heights. At length we turned an angle and lost it altogether.

We were now surrounded by gloomy mountains, wild, barren, and severe, towering in all directions, diversified in outline, and full of majestic grandeur. Before us, a vast expanse of water, like an immense lake, calm and tranquil, its dark green, almost black tinge, telling of immense depths.

For upwards of four hours we were rowing amidst such scenes, varied only by an occasional fir-clad hill, and tiny house on the mountain slope, where men were chopping and stacking wood ; singing a song the while, which went ringing across the water,

and seemed to startle by its grotesque merriment all the silence and gloom. Often, for long together, not a sound broke the stillness, save the measured dip of the oars, as the men, leisurely as ever, carried us onward.

To avoid the tide they hugged the shore in many places, and once came upon one of the small settlements—the little houses on the slope, surrounded by pines, and the wood-choppers. This was a good opportunity for killing two birds with one stone—a rest and a gossip. An animated conversation ensued in a language that sounded as barbarous as it was unintelligible, and away we shot again, leaving the men to their work—and how remote from the world!

So at last another turn brought us in sight of Aardal. Here Nature had put on a more smiling mood. A small colony of picturesque houses with red roofs and green shutters disclosed itself; a church with a quaint little spire—all surrounded by sloping hills, smiling and fertile; a picture of quiet prosperity, of tranquillity and repose, such as they who live out in the great bustling world of life dream of, perhaps, but know not. A small pier shot out into the water, a landmark for the rowers. The inn stood just above the landing, cool and white in the sunshine, small and of no

pretension, but kept by two of the most honest men in Norway—Jens Klingenberg and his son Jens.

A stalwart man, no longer young, came hurrying down. This, thought I, is the landlord; and remembered the lesson I had learnt from Herr Lindström.

“Klingenberg?” said I, as we landed: meaning thereby, “Are you the innkeeper?”

“Ja! ja! Klingenberg!” cried he, with a perfect shout of delight at another proof that his reputation had preceded him into the world. His face shone with honesty and good-will. Grasping my hand to assist in hoisting me up from the boat, he wrung it with a force that brought tears to the eyes—though not, I fear, tears of gratitude. You see, he altogether mistook the question—we were at cross purposes. A younger man now came out of the house, strong and well made, with an open, intelligent face; too much like the old man to be any one but Jens Klingenberg junior.

“Klingenberg, I suppose?” I repeated, as before.

“Ja! ja!” he cried, echoing his father, a broad grin upon his honest countenance, and hastening to welcome us.

So in we went, cramped by four or five hours in the boat, and glad to shake out some of the stiffness by a climb up the stairs to the first floor. The room was

light and cheerful, the view from the windows glorious. Before us the little pier, the boatmen lounging against the sides, glad enough of a rest ; still more glad of some beer, for which they developed unlimited capacities, and Klingenberg inexhaustible stores. Far away stretched the calm, deep waters of the fjord ; the stately mountains on either side narrowing more and more towards Aardal, until, away behind the house, they closed in the view.

It was past one o'clock, and we were only half-way on our journey, and that the shorter half. From here to the Vettifos was an almost continual ascent, and a road steep and rugged. Luckily a horse was to be had, or the journey would have been as much beyond my capacities as the possession of Aladdin's lamp, or any other of the cherished impossibilities of youth. There was only one horse, but A.'s powers of walking and climbing being unlimited, it was not necessary to draw lots for the "fiery steed."

We started about two o'clock, with young Klingenberg as guide — a necessary accompaniment. Passing through the village, the little white church and the cottages, we reached the borders of a small lake. From an adjoining boat-house Jens brought forth a saddle. Then he and two men rowed swiftly across the water, and we landed again in

about a quarter of an hour. Leaving the boat in charge of the men, Jens threw the heavy saddle over his shoulder, as if its weight had been mere child's play to him.

Twenty minutes' walk over the fields and the



LAERDALSÖREN.

slopes, and we reached a small settlement, where, hard by, a cream-coloured horse was grazing. In answer to Jens's call, a man came out of a carpenter's shed; a man pale and refined-looking, with one of the noblest heads ever seen. He gave Jens a nod of good fellowship, and went off for the horse. Jens threw down the saddle, not

sorry, with all his strength, to get rid of his burden. It fitted the horse's back far better than his shoulder.

As for the horse, it was one of the prettiest, most docile creatures imaginable. Before the end, I loved the animal, and like the Irishman with his cow, could I have sent it over to England in a letter, it should have bid a long farewell to its wild mountain life. Grazing quietly about a hundred yards away, it caught sight of us, and knew well enough what the invasion meant. Pricking up its ears, and arching its neck, it gave a slight neigh, and began gently trotting up and down, its white mane and long tail fluttering in the breeze. Answering the master's call as obediently as a dog, it followed gently at his heels up to the cottage.

We were soon ready, and once more on the way. Now began a long, toilsome climb, which lasted until seven o'clock at night. I had never gone through a like experience on horseback; I should not care to attempt it again. Without encountering actual danger—thanks to the sure-footedness of the animal—we were often in what appeared such imminent peril, that more than once I regretted the adventure, and devoutly wished myself back in Laerdal. For the pedestrians there was not even an appearance of risk, beyond the remote

possibility of stones loosening from the heights and falling upon them.

It was wonderful how the horse piloted himself over the rough places and through impossible difficulties; exercising a skill and discrimination far greater than that of his rider. At length I gave it up to him, and allowed him to take his own course. The sagacity of the animal, the manner in which he would pause a moment at a troublesome spot, seem to pick out his way mentally, and then, boldly taking it, never hesitate until it was over, was marvellous.

Jens was dressed in mountain costume—a short brown jacket, breeches coming down to his knees, dark ribbed stockings, and boots thick and heavy. He carried a stout stick, spiked, and wore a low felt hat, broad and picturesque. Over his arm he had thrown a mackintosh, an apparently useless encumbrance this sunny day; but Jens was wiser than we were, and knew more about his own climate; and presently, when he got tired of his burden, the horse relieved him of it.

The road, uneven enough from the very beginning, was nothing startling, and for a time we went on calmly. True, the horse would sometimes mount a hillock which brought my head into contact with his, and in descending reversed the matter, and left

it prone with his tail. He seemed to think nothing of these little diversions; took them in a matter-of-fact spirit, and forced me to do likewise.

In this valley the scenery was laughing, sunny, and almost fertile. Fir trees clothed the slopes,



ON THE ROAD TO VETTI.

and birches were dotted about the plain, which yielded a carpet of ferns and flowers. Presently we turned to the right, and in a nook of the mountains suddenly came upon the roar of a torrent. In a few moments we were in sight of the grand waterfall itself, rushing down in great strength from the mountain height, breaking in its course into three

or four distinct falls, one below the other—an immense volume of white foam making all the air alive with its noise, and destroying the sense of solitude that hitherto had filled the pass.

A lovely and lonely spot indeed, wild and weird to the last degree. The slopes were a mixture of hard barren rock and pine trees that fringed delicately against the bright blue sky. Great boulders stood out frowningly, many of them weighing thousands of tons, split, in great cracks and fissures, from the mountain, hanging, as it seemed, by a mere thread. Around us, and in the bed of the torrent, to which they offered small impediment, lay enormous pieces of rock and stone.

Here I encountered my first "sensation" on horseback, and proved how trustworthy was the gentle steed. Advancing towards the waterfall, we reached a bridge which had to be crossed. It seemed composed of logs of wood, not more than a foot wide in all, without any protection on either side in the shape of railing. The water rushed beneath it with tremendous force and speed; the spray flew upwards and around; a cold dampness in the air penetrated to one's very marrow. The noise of the fall was of thunder; our voices took a far-off sound, and could scarcely be heard. So abundant was the spray that

Jens put on his mackintosh. The bridge was wet and slippery, and over it I was expected to guide the quadruped, in full possession of all my faculties.

The first impulse was to get down ; but I saw that by so doing I should sink to the very depths of Jens's estimation, and of the two evils preferring the least, kept my seat. Away we went, and I gave myself up for lost.

But the horse took the planks with the utmost coolness. In the very middle of the bridge, within an ace of the rushing water, his rider deafened and confused by the noise, wet and chilled by the spray, he came to a dead stop, as much as to say : "Admire this sublime scene, but above all admire the steadiness of our nerves and the coolness of our heads." Certainly, if he reasoned in this way, it was taking too much for granted. Then, at a slight call from Jens, in advance with A., he quietly set in motion again, and proceeded to the other side.

I felt that I had gone through a tremendous peril, a narrow escape from the jaws of death. In reality it was nothing of the sort, and existed only in imagination ; but that made no difference to the sensation. Certainly if the horse had slipped only an inch, both would have rolled over ; there was no space to recover footing. But these horses never

do slip, and you must resign yourself to them in good faith.

If danger existed at all, it came after, when courage and coolness were in some degree really required. Now began a steep, sharp, and, as it seemed, perilous ascent for any one on horseback. The narrow, broken path wound up the mountain. Gradually we rose far above the valley and the world, to a level with the waterfall. We now looked down upon what we had so lately looked up to, and seemed to command the situation. The water rushed below us with a far-off sound. Often I could not see an inch of ground beside me : nothing but space. The path was rough and broken, its curves were so sharp and sudden that more than once the horse brought his feet together, his head overhung one side of the precipice and his tail the other. At such moments I felt like Mahomet's coffin, hovering between heaven and earth ; like an eagle suspended in mid-air, but—I hardly blush to own it—without the eagle's courage because without his wings. I gazed sheerly into yawning depths ; to slip from the horse's back would have been to alight into thin air.

All this would have been lost in walking. It was lost upon A., who serenely wended his way onwards, yet more than once turned round to call

out that he preferred his own legs to the horse's. He and Jens took the lead and kept it easily. Our progress was a far slower one than theirs. The animal was deliberate in his movements, pondered them well, paused every now and then a whole half-minute between one step and the next. He knew that the slightest mistake meant death to himself and his rider. In some places the slip of an inch, a tread upon a loose pebble, would have given us a long flight into the depths, to take our place amongst the rocks, and pass out of life and our little earthly sphere. It is melancholy to think that the world would have gone on rolling just the same.

“Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day, and cease to be.”

It is so for the best of us, one and all. But this is not productive of private and personal consolation. Companionship in suffering, creating sympathy one with another, is sweet to man, who is made up of a strange mixture of contradictions ; but in the closing scene of all, where each has to go forth lonely and alone, this consolation is for ever denied us.

At length we reached our highest point and began to descend. Tremendous and dangerous as seemed the climbing, the downward process was far worse. Every now and then the horse himself

would stand still, and Jens had to rouse his drooping courage by a call; once or twice, indeed, it was necessary to return and lead him forward.

So we went on, until we reached once more an open level plain, through which ran a noisy shallow stream—water pursues us everywhere in Norway—the shallower the noisier, after the fashion of this world and the custom of its people. Here we found green grass and soft turf; and the horse, making up for lost time, passed Jens and A. with a bound, and went flying off on the wings of the wind. Before the pedestrians had traversed that long bit of plain, we had scoured it half a dozen times. Then a short ascent, and we reached the small farm of Gjælde, half-way on the road to Vetti.

We dismounted, and found ourselves in a mountain hut or cottage, the interior so dark it was difficult to distinguish the long deal table at one end, a rough chair or bench here and there, and a bed in a kind of recess. A woman, the sole occupant, appeared glad to see any one coming up from the world, though that world might be no larger or more important than Aardal. Opposite this hut was another, where sat a woman and a girl near a braize fire, in a chimney almost as big as the hut itself. The woman was rolling out some oat-cake dough into the thinness of a sixpence, large

and round, about one foot in diameter. It seemed tough and hard, more like paper or parchment than anything else. This, with the dexterity of long use and the aid of a thin stick, she tossed upon a flat sheet of iron, a sort of frying-pan without sides, and placed it upon the embers. When baked, it was tossed again on to a pile lying beside her. This was called "*flad-bröd*," and flat it certainly was in every sense of the word—tasteless, and containing, it might be supposed, a very small amount of nourishment. But the Norwegians are able to keep life in the body with what would be gradual starvation to other people. No doubt their free, healthy state, which calls for the smallest possible wear and tear of the nervous system, counts for a great deal in the matter. With it all, they are hardy and contented. The old woman sitting near her braize fire, baking her bread, was a picture,—a strange picture of life, full of rough power ; a certain silent eloquence that carried its lesson, if one chose to apply it. She looked and nodded at us in a kindly way, but never moved her position or ceased her work.

The hardest part of the road yet lay before us, and began with the very beginning. As we left the cottage, down in the fields of this little farm we saw two men ploughing in an original manner. Their arms were thrown round each other's necks, and

thus, naturally yoked, they dragged the plough, and the task was done.

Soon after starting we came to another magnificent cataract, the Gjeldefos, falling from a tremendous height in showers of frostlike spray; now hundreds of feet clear of all obstacles, now coming into contact with the rock, fringing itself into white foam and devices so fantastic that Art here seemed to have lent her aid to Nature. This fall was infinitely beautiful.

The ascent now became so steep and rugged, the paths so difficult and broken, so full of loose stones, that it was harder work than ever both for quadruped and biped. Higher, and yet more high we ascended; wilder, grander, more sublime and severe grew the scenery. The rugged mountains gradually closed in the pass, which became so contracted that we seemed to be reaching the end of all things. Far down we gazed into a narrow gorge, through which the noisy, shallow water ran: an accumulation of trees, rocks, stones, ferns, and wild flowers; a tremendous mountain chasm; all the difficulties and sublime points of the Valley of Diamonds, but alas! without its precious stones. Here and there were mountain sides, perpendicular from the top to the bottom; immense natural walls it took one's very breath away to contemplate.

The weather now changed. Heavy clouds gathered and threw their dark shadows over the pass, which assumed a weird, sombre, and dejected appearance. One felt the influence insensibly, as a downpour of rain commenced. The very beauties of nature take to themselves wings, when the sun withdraws his influence. Jens, with a mackintosh coming down to his heels, set weather and rain at defiance; the beauties of the pass, present or absent, seemed equally indifferent to him. But A., who had brought no mackintosh, turned up his collar, and began to look out for signs of the Vetti farm.

In time they declared themselves. Gradually we rose to a level with the mountain tops; turned out of the narrow path edging the precipice, and passing to the right, reached a sort of plateau or table-land, rough and uneven, but evidently the beginning of the end. In a short time, 5000 feet above the level of the sea, out of the world, out of sight and sound of humanity; in a spot secret, retired, and silent as the grave—and little less cheerful—we came upon the humble settlement of the Vetti Farm. The rain was falling in torrents; it was now seven o'clock; we could do nothing but remain here quietly for the night, and go on to the fall the next morning. For though at *Vetti*, we were not at the *fos*: it would still take two hours to

reach it, acquaint ourselves with its wonders, and return to the little settlement.

Jens was relieved at our decision. That morning only he had returned from the Vettifos with two students who had come from Sweden for the purpose of making excursions in Aardal and the Sogne Fjord: and though he seemed still to have plenty of work in him, he must have gone through enough for one day. So we made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. A solitary mountain hut, dark skies, a steady downpour; a temperature cold and chilling; no fire; people who spoke not one word of English;—all this was conducive to mirth only to such natures as belong to the order of Mr. Mark Tapley.

Yet we found more than could have been expected in a spot so desolate, so difficult of access, so remote from the world, and so far above it. The little hut contained a living-room, two tiny sleeping-rooms, just large enough to hold two small beds in each, and a fourth room that was half bed, half store-room. As there was not space in the sleeping-rooms for a bed *and* a washstand, a basin was placed on a chair in the sitting-room; and an original looking-glass developed mountains and precipices in one's physiognomy, and reflected a double set of features. We endeavoured to buy it as a curiosity, but the

people, perhaps not unreasonably, considered it a precious article, and refused to part with it.

This cottage had evidently been built for the accommodation of travellers. The owners of the farm lived in an opposite building, composed of one large room, with a huge chimney corner, where burning peats sent forth fragrant odours. They were decent, civilised-looking people, like most of their kind that we saw in Aardal—men and women of a type above the ordinary men and women one meets with in that class of life.

They prepared us tea in their own quarters, and ran across with it to ours. The fact of not being able to comprehend each other—not even Jens spoke a word of English—made the slight errors and misunderstandings that occurred so many golden opportunities for merriment in this abode of melancholy.

Before Jens disappeared for the night we went through the labour of a long and animated conversation, and though often wide of the mark, each was convinced of being thoroughly understood by the other. There was something so intelligent about Jens, that his ignorance of English was nothing short of a disgrace: he was so open, frank, and honest, so anxious to please, so gentle and quiet, that we felt ourselves lucky to have found so pleasant a guide. In this benighted spot, not only hours, but

days and weeks away from all civilisation, an ill-tempered or morose fellow, with an "evil eye," or an ungainly cast of countenance, would have been an object for conciliation. Jens was the opposite to this.

The next morning we started soon after five o'clock for the Vettifos. From this point every one has to walk; the path is too rugged, broken, and precipitous for any horse to attempt.

A road rough and rugged indeed; full of rocks and stones, brambles and wild roots; overgrown with tangle which concealed many of the inequalities, and sent one now and then sprawling head foremost in a manner more humorous than pleasant. A sharp, steep, quick descent. The rain which had come down in torrents all night had now ceased; but the path was wet and slippery, and the shrubs, often up to one's waist, were dripping water.

At last the bottom; and turning sharply to the right, before us was the waterfall we had come so far to seek. A high, perpendicular cliff, straight as a wall. Over the summit came tumbling the white water, in a clear fall of 1000 feet, touching no rock, meeting no obstacle in its way. In this its greatest attraction consists. Other falls are as high, and higher; other falls have as great a body of water, and greater; but an unbroken descent of 1000 feet,



THE VETTIFOS.

this other falls have not. Fancy an immense column of water falling nearly three times the height of St. Paul's, in one long unbroken stream.

And yet we were both disappointed. There was no doubt about that. We had heard so much of the Vettifos; it had been described in colours so glowing as an eighth wonder of the world, and one of the great wonders of Norway, that we had expected more

than the reality. In point of beauty it was not to be compared with the two great water-falls we had passed on the road from Aardal.

The surrounding rocks were so gigantic that the immense height could not be realised. The body of water was small—so small, that towards the bottom the water lost itself in spray. After heavy rains it increases, but the rains of this one night had not made any perceptible difference. Jens said he had often seen a much greater volume of water than to-day. It was certainly wonderful to see this long, continuous column; to trace its progress from the moment it left the height to the very end, always falling, falling, falling; but it raised little emotion beyond that of marvel.

Many things were against us. We had had to turn out at an early hour; the dull morning threatened rain; it was cold and raw; the road wet and unpleasant, the walk laborious in the extreme; imagination had found nothing on which to fasten itself. Well for us that the whole way up from Aardal had been so full of beauty—it is one of the grandest passes in Norway—so sublime in its severity; had more than delighted and repaid us for our exertions; otherwise, to disappointment would have been added vexation of spirit.

We could not approach within many yards of the

fall; the cold was freezing; the spray would have drenched us in a few moments. So we contented ourselves with a seat upon huge stones at a respectful distance, and watched the water, which took all sorts of fantastic devices on its course from the top to the bottom, according to the power with which it fell over the edge. The whole surrounding scene was inexpressibly wild, rugged, and barren, but most beautiful; and with sunshine it would have been far more so. Mountains enclosed us in a great rocky rampart, impregnable, impassable: we were at the ends of the earth.

After a sufficient amount of gazing, shivering in the cold, and trying in vain to get up an enthusiastic sensation, we started again for Vetti. If the downward road had been hard work, what must be said of the up-hill way in returning? A. and Jens took it as a very matter-of-fact affair; went up and up, and would have gone up and up very comfortably until Doomsday, I have no doubt. It was quite exasperating. Every now and then they turned round from their distant vantage ground, and pityingly surveyed a struggling mortal who never thought to reach Vetti alive, and to whom they never offered help or consolation. But we got there at last, about eight o'clock, and after half an hour's rest were thankful for breakfast.

About nine, or soon after, Jens brought up the horse, and we started on our journey back to Aardal. What should I have done without my gentle steed? Certainly have left my bones behind me at Vetti, or on the road.



VETTI FARM.

Our return journey, nearly all down-hill, was so much the more difficult for the horse. We soon got into the old path, and looked over the giddy precipice into the yawning depths, where still the noisy water ran its course. If I had cared little for my position yesterday, I cared less for it to-day. Again we found ourselves in the same critical situation; again, at one or two of the sharp turnings, the

animal's head overhung one side of the terrific precipice, and his tail the other. Once more I felt suspended in mid-air, and went through the same paralysing sensations. At one such spot, I remember well, the faithful steed came to a dead stand, unable to take his next step. His limbs trembled : very probably his rider's did also. Had it been possible, I should have dismounted ; but to get down on the one side would have been to send the horse over, and to get down on the other would have been to consign myself to an apparently bottomless pit ; there was not an inch of ground to stand upon. In vain Jens called ; he had to come back at last, and guide the horse round the curve.

In due time we reached the Gjælde Farm, and were half-way to Aardal. It was Sunday—we regretted having to travel, but there was no help for it—and the quiet of Sunday reigned in the little tenements. All the women folk were away, including the bread-baker. One of the youths we had seen ploughing yesterday was standing at the door, dressed in his best, and hailed Jens with acclamation. Jens seemed a very popular character wherever he went, and evidently deserved the honour. Here we rested for twenty minutes or more ; then off again, and in due time reached the farm where we had first taken the horse. No wonder the

gentle creature was loved, after the apparent dangers we had gone through together. We parted in silence—though not in tears.

Jens shouldered the saddle. We made for the boat, were soon on the water, and soon at the other side. It was a glorious row across that lake, closely surrounded by the solemn mountains. The saddle was put back in the boat-house, and we went on to the village. The villagers in their Sunday costumes looked smart and happy. The church was closed, for no service had been held there that day. In many parts of Norway there is perhaps one clergyman for four churches, so that each church gets a turn once a month. Again the superiority of the people was manifest; fine, well-built men and women, with handsome, intelligent faces, bright eyes, and well-developed heads.

At the inn old Jens Klingenberg came out and greeted us as if we had known him for six months, and had brought him some long-coveted favour. It was now two o'clock, but what with resting, dinner, and chatting with Jens, falling into blunders, and falling out of them again, we were not off until some time past three. Poor Jens! in spite of his strong, thick boots, his feet were sore—he had performed the journey twice in forty-eight hours—and he told us that not for a king's

ransom would he have started off again that day or the next.

The men were ready, and we went down to the boat. A long, hard row was before them, and part of the way the tide would be contrary. Klingenberg and Jens escorted us down the pier in procession, gave us a hand-grasp, bade us come again, and we pushed off. Receding gradually, we left a vision of peace and beauty behind us. The little village in the quiet rest of the Sunday; the small white houses with their red roofs and green shutters; the tiny church with its quaint spire; the amphitheatre of hills in the background: all formed a picture not to be forgotten. Jens, old and young, sat one on each side the portico up the stone steps, watching us out of sight, until they became mere dots in the landscape, and the vision faded. Jens Klingenberg, senior and junior, I love you both for your honest natures; for the traces of a quiet, straight-forward life that shone out in both your faces—natures not so common in the world that they should be passed over without a word of record.

For six long hours we were rowing across the Sogne Fjord, amidst the gloomy mountains that were as grand and majestic to-day as they had been yesterday, and grew more weird and mysterious as

twilight fell. Something else fell too ; rain in such torrents as we do not often see in England. Here and there perfect columns and spouts of water shot down from the clouds, athwart the mountains, and into the fjord. One of the men had a mackintosh, and insisted on A.'s using it, whilst the man, rowing in shirt sleeves, got wet to the skin. I vow I could not have taken it. But we made it up to him afterwards, and no doubt he would be willing enough to go through a soaking again upon the same terms.

At length we sighted Laerdal, and presently landed upon terra firma, glad enough to do so. My first question at the inn was for the landlord, and I asked for "Klingenberg" of the woman who was in the dining-room. I never made out that woman; there was something silent and uncanny about her ; something secret and not above-board. She moved about with a slow, quiet step ; had a strange way of looking at you as if she saw through your head into the distance beyond ; would listen to what you had to say with a rude mesmeric stare, and turn away without sign or token of having heard or heeded. But presently she would return with the commission executed. Even about the landlord himself there was something peculiar. He was comparatively young, good-looking, gentlemanly in appearance,

and well dressed. But he had a way of frowning when speaking to you, which might perhaps be put down to his endeavours to catch what was said to him in English. He had a way of not making you welcome, and you left the inn without regret.

To-night, when I went and asked for "Klingenberg," the woman stared as usual, but disappeared faster than was her wont. She went out, found the landlord, and said to him: "Those Englishmen have come back from Vetti, and one of them is asking all over the place for *Klingenberg*; do you think he is mad?"

Enter the landlord laughing, and the mystery was explained. He had misunderstood my former question—rather a habit of his, as I have said. Klingenberg was only the name of the innkeeper at Aardal; the Norwegian for innkeeper was *Verten*.

So ended, on the whole, one of our pleasantest excursions in Norway—one I should regret to have passed over. We saw no scenery of its kind more severely grand and sublime than this mountain pass. In spite of some disappointment in the Vettifos itself, we had been well repaid for our trouble. The whole two days' experience, with the figures of Jens Klingenberg and his son Jens standing out pro-

minently in the foreground, and fading from view as we shot away into the broad arm of the Sogne Fjord, has left an impression on the memory that will long remain. May we not have met for the last time !

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOGNE FJORD—JEREMIAH BROWN, ESQUIRE—BERGEN.

THE sun had risen when, between three and four o'clock, we were aroused by the mysterious woman, from too short a slumber after returning from the Vettifos. Opening the door without ceremony, and putting down our boots with a clatter that would have aroused a regiment of Dutchmen, she muttered some cabalistic words and withdrew.

Ten minutes afterwards the door was once more abruptly opened without let or hindrance, permission or apology; she brought in a tray of coffee, laid it upon the table, and condescending to utter a "Vor so got!" again retired. We had begged this coffee the previous night of the landlord, as a special favour; he had become our intercessor with the woman, and, with an ill grace there was no attempt to conceal, she had finally nodded assent. But, grace or no grace, we were grateful; she was evidently a woman of her word, whatever

her failings might be; and it is just possible that she thought it hard lines to have to turn out at 3.30 a.m. to make coffee for "those Englishmen."

It was hard lines that early rising. But several




ON THE ROAD TO VETTI.

days would elapse before the steamer again started for Bergen, and, unable to lose the time, no choice was left in the matter. We packed, and drank our coffee, with windows wide open, the daylight broad and full, early though it was, and in spite of the heights that overshadowed the inn; within sound

of those trickling waterfalls that night and day kept up an unceasing chatter, until you seemed haunted by some restless and familiar spirit of the air. We drank our coffee, I say: and as its aromatic vapours, like incense, ascended, our hearts softened towards the gloomy woman, whose motto seemed to be "Deeds, not words." Then, all ready, we departed.

The men who had rowed us yesterday from Aardal were waiting at the door, took our luggage, and hurried down to their little boat. The village slumbered: man or dog stirred not: no chimney sent forth its thin cloud of blue peat smoke to announce that the cottage inmates had wakened to another day; no sound disturbed the echo of our footsteps. In silence we were rowed to the steamer, and turned our backs upon Laerdal—as we thought for ever.

But in Norway you must be certain of nothing; above all, never certain that you have said farewell to any place for the last time. We thought that we should see Laerdal no more; yet fate willed that we should one day return, spend some days under the crushing weight of those mountains, the monotonous sound of the waterfalls. Many things as well as many people will not bear too close a contact, too intimate a familiarity.



We were only just in time for the steamer. A few minutes after getting on board she left her moorings; soon we were out in deep waters, surrounded by the wild mountains. On her way to Bergen the steamer would call at many places, but not at Aardal. We should not again see the quaint village and Jens Klingenberg, father and son. We even caught no distant view of the place in passing the arm of the fjord that led up to it, but steamed onwards, amidst new scenes.

The Sogne Fjord may be compared to a tree, the main body forming the trunk, the inlets its branches. In these inlets the best of the scenery will be found. On the broad water you have barren mountains on all sides, wild and desolate, gloomy and severe. But many of the inlets lead up to charming spots, rich with verdure; laughing slopes interspersed with vast pine forests, and cataracts that rush down the mountains in long unbroken threads of white tumbling foam. Sunny valleys and passes divide the hills, run upwards, and turn out of sight, as if to lure you to their far-off beauties, as lure you they do. One of the pleasantest things in Norway is to take such a fjord as the Sogne, there pitch your tent for a month, and become intimate with its most favoured spots. They cannot well be seen under other circumstances.

Hidden from view, like the best things and the best people of earth, they are found only by long seeking.

One lovely spot was the neighbourhood of Frithiof's Saga. The sun poured his hot rays upon the glinting trees that threw long sha-



ON THE SOGNE FJORD.

dows athwart the grass. Beyond this sylvan retreat a pine forest tempted you with its cool, far-reaching depths. The landing-stage was crowded with people. The bowing exchanged between those on board and those on the pier was in the highest degree amusing. Twenty times each man would take off his hat, replacing it firmly between

every salute. This bowing is an institution in Norway from north to south : the fact has already been stated. It occupies a considerable portion of their time, which might be thus divided :—So many hours a week for the duties of the table, so many for sleeping, so many for work, so many for play ; a proportion and a half for bowing.

Until all this bowing was done, not a thing could be attended to in the way of business. Business over, the boat could not start until the ceremony was once more gone through from beginning to end. One felt reluctant to leave so lovely a spot. Behind us huge mountains of bare granite looked hazy in the sunshine, towered into the broad white intensity of the midday sky, like the pinnacles of some far-off cloud-land temple. On the other side, again, were immense mountains covered with snow, and in the midst of this snow-field the blue ice of the everlasting glaciers. A party of climbers were approaching it. With the help of glasses we watched them turn, pause, look down upon us, wave their handkerchiefs, and then proceed to the enjoyment of their cold task.

There was a party of people on board, half English, half Swedish, from having lived long years in Sweden. The girls, magnificent in golden hair and rainbow dresses, proved that fair syrens qualify

themselves for flirting just as much in Sweden as in England. They were very lively, with little ripples of laughter, occasionally breaking out into a chorus that was perhaps rather too noisy, and a little



NEAR BERGEN.

dispelled the illusion of bright eyes. One of them, sentimentally gifted, devoted her attention to the scenery, and, despite the indifference of the others to the beauties that surrounded them on all sides, shot forth minute guns of! "Girls, attention! oh, do look! this is too beautiful! this is quite too exquisite! this is *too*, too charming! oh, those

delicious mountains!"—addressed, perhaps, to a gigantic mass of frowning granite, full of solemn lights and shades. Exclamations that, in the midst of such scenes, were like a jarring discord suddenly introduced into the strains of a grand harmony.

This young lady evidently thought otherwise, and in the most glorious parts of the journey gave vent to her fine feelings by such exclamations as the above, reiterated again and again. The next morning, on visiting the picture-gallery in Bergen, we found they had been before us, and the gentleman had signed himself in the Visitors' Book as Jeremiah Brown, Esquire. It is certain that Jeremiah Brown, Esquire, and his party were very lively that day on board; and as they expressed their full intention of returning again next year to scenes which raised in them such deep but not silent emotions, it is possible that some happy members of the travelling community—perhaps kindred spirits—may fall under the influence of those lovely blue eyes, and golden hair, and little ripples of laughter, relieved by pensive sighs and gushing enthusiasm—all the feminine artillery that pierces the heart and destroys the peace of the susceptible portion of mankind.

All day long we steamed about the Sogne Fjord,

the wildest and most severe of all the Norwegian fjords, but not possessing the unrivalled beauty and luxuriance of the Hardanger. The one has the savage grandeur of the north—fit home for the Vikings; the other has the softer aspect of a more southern atmosphere. The freaks of nature are no more to be relied on than the moods of the wind, or the smiles of a beauty. For the most part, we were out on the broad fjord, but occasionally turned up into an inlet where little wooden sheds were built out at the end of short wooden piers, and threw their reflections deep down into the surface of the sparkling water. Here we would stop at a station, land passengers and take on others, and now and then hoist an old cow into the hold, so cadaverous-looking one could only suppose she was migrating into the country for change of air. At one of these stations, just as we had started, a cavalcade consisting of half a dozen carriages came tearing down the valley path, and a shouting ensued that might have waked the Seven Sleepers. It was the only time I ever saw Norwegians really excited. Evidently they were a little ashamed of themselves, for as soon as the noise had had the desired effect, and the steamer had put back, half the small crowd watching us on the pier turned tail and departed.

The latter part of the journey was less interest-

ing than the former. The mountains fell away as we neared the sea, and we passed through flat islets and narrow channels, here and there a cluster of picturesque houses or a quaint lighthouse upon some solitary rock. Boats laden with wood, whose curious forms seemed to take us back to the days of the Greek galleys, varied the scene. Towards evening, a party of young Norwegian women on board sang a hymn, and had a little religious service amongst themselves, their faces turned seawards; primitive, indeed, but pleasant, so earnest and devotional was their fervour. Only amongst these far-off people—their lives are so quiet and isolated, that to all intents and purposes they are very far-off—do we see reflected the simple manners of our forefathers. But the people of a mountainous country are generally more religious and impressionable than those of the lowlands. It may be that these noble objects of nature have a corresponding influence upon the minds and hearts living beneath their shadows.

This little band landed at the last station before Bergen, having shaken hands all round with one another as soon as their hymn was over. It was not very beautifully sung; Norwegian peasants have no idea of music; but it was sung with quiet energy, and to an old tune often heard in our

churches in England. It sounded strange and unfamiliar amidst these rude, far-off scenes, echoed from every nook and corner of the rocks, and floating away towards the mountains. An incident to have delighted such a man as John Wesley, who would have joined in with the heartiest of them.

Soon after this, we, too, came to our last stage. It was about ten o'clock at night, and the glory of the day was setting. But the twilight could not conceal the extreme beauty of the situation of Bergen. It lies under the shadow of great hills, with houses beyond the town reaching far up the green slopes. The port, stretching up into the town, gives shelter to a multitude of vessels.

As we made way, Mr. Jeremiah Brown fell into a sad error. A boat manned by sailors, looking as smart as if they belonged to a man-of-war, had pushed out a little from the shore. The sailors were resting upon their oars. "Look, girls!" cried the excited and delighted Mr. Brown. "There is the Herr Captain Smidt. That is his boat, and those are his men. And there he is himself in the stern. He has done this in our honour. Dear me! how attentive and polite of him, to be sure!" concluded the gratified old gentleman. "Wave, girls! wave your handkerchiefs to the Herr Captain Smidt. I will do the same! Hurrah for Gamle

Norge!" The waving that ensued, of hands and umbrellas was frantic; but the more frantic the waving, the less response from the boat. "Very funny, girls!" cried the perplexed Mr. Brown. "Very strange that the Herr Captain Smidt does not return our salute! He must be short-sighted."

Then, as we took a slight turn nearer the shore, the frightful discovery was made that it was a case of mistaken identity: all this waving and enthusiasm had been thrown away upon utter strangers. One quite felt for them, they looked so dejected and crestfallen, so small; and, as one might say, limp.

By and by we all landed, Mr. Jeremiah Brown and party to adjourn to Holdt's Hotel, we to the Scandinavia. Our old friend Mr. B., with whom we had journeyed up the Spirillen, had strongly recommended this inn. "I always go to the Scandinavia. I always cultivate the beautiful and the splendid," said he, with a grandiloquent tone that in so simple and kindly a nature was only amusing, but in any one else would have been ridiculous. "When I wake in the morning," he continued, "I like to jump out of bed, pull aside the curtains, and immediately see before me on the one side the grand mountains, and on the other the life and beauty of the shipping. Ah, that is fine!" And

he threw up his arms in enthusiasm, and cut a caper.

So we promised to "descend" at the Scandinavia, where, he said, he should join us if we only stayed long enough, after having safely conveyed his sister into the keeping of her friends. An hotel porter, awaiting the arrival of the steamer (they always remind one of hawks watching for prey) seized upon our possessions. Passing between large warehouses, and mounting a short, steep hill, we at once came upon the building.

It was certainly dull, and gave one the idea of a house whose glory had departed; a house living upon a past reputation, or injured by the upspringing of a more fashionable rival. Holdt's hotel, we afterwards found, was better organised, more cheerful and comfortable. The Scandinavia was full of long, dark passages, that might be haunted by ghosts of the departed, but seemed certainly little troubled by the living. One solitary waiter appeared in possession of the place, showed us to our rooms, waited at table. We arrived on the Monday, and left on the Wednesday night, and had nothing to complain of beyond the gloom and solitude of the house. Alone at meals, the one waiter could well attend to our wants, whilst at dinner the landlord presided at the sideboard. But

"the grandeur of the mountains," which had raised Mr. B.'s enthusiasm, could not atone for the desolation within the house, that hung about it like a depressing atmosphere.

Bergen is a quaint and picturesque old town, dating back to the eleventh century—far quainter than Christiania, by which it has been superseded. It was once the chief town of Norway, and for a time the Royal residence; but all this has now gone from it. Yet still it remains a more important seaport than the capital. It has a population of nearly 40,000 inhabitants. The streets, as a rule, are quiet, and there is little noise or excitement going on within them, except when a heavy cart charges over the stones with a deafening roar. The fish-market in the early morning is a scene of activity and bustle. It lies in the very centre of the town, on the great square, at the extremity of the harbour. Here, in boats on the water and stalls on the land, the fishmen and fishwomen pursue a thriving and noisy trade. The housewives and servants of the town come down in strong force, and bargain for the day's dinner. The spot is thronged with people, but not all on purchase bent; many come out of curiosity, as we did, to see the gathering of the clans, watch the lively scene, and take note of the quaint costumes. A perfect

Babel of sounds. Loud tones in all directions, every key, and productive more of discord than harmony, confuse, embarrass, and surround you.

It is a curious and pleasant scene, full of life and animation, the very air itself loaded with the smell of the fish—which is not so pleasant. Immediately in



FISH-MARKET, BERGEN.

front of you, standing in the middle of the square, one of the great hills stretches its head high and wide; green slopes almost to the very summit. Half-way up these slopes, so elevated that you wonder who has patience to climb them day after day, are quaint old houses, their red roofs standing out in rich and striking contrast with the green background of

the hills; a panorama of life and beauty, glowing freshly in the morning sun. To the left hand is the noisy fish-market, and the townswomen, young and old, many of them in quaint Norwegian costumes, are making their purchases, with an earnestness worthy of a greater if not a better cause. Conspicu-



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ous among them are the young women with the "snood"—the badge of maidenhood in certain parts of Norway—red braid twisted round and round the plaits of hair, until the hair is no longer seen. It is then worn round the head like a coronet—a curious and not becoming custom.

Beyond the fish-market is the forest of shipping,

stretching all down the harbour, an ever-shifting scene, as the vessels come and go; streamers of many countries are flying in the wind; all is sparkling, brimming over with life. You catch the influence, and wonder how any one can in such scenes, and breathing such air, ever grow as old and wrinkled as those old fishwomen that are brandishing their wares and disputing for a fraction. Every now and then a cry of "Flöt!" comes from the shore, as some one appears at one of the narrow openings between the great warehouses—openings that are so many landing-stages; the quick retort of "Ja vel!" rings across the water, and a boat shoots out in reply. But the sun is pouring down his intense rays upon all, and though it is yet early morning, you feel that you are getting gradually baked. Quaint, lively, sparkling, and original as the scene is, full of fine tone and colouring, you are glad to turn into a quiet street and cross to the shady side.

These streets are many of them narrow and irregular. Openings from the pavement lead into cellars, where people live and make boxes, painted a glaring red, decorated with gaudy and fantastic flowers and devices, with which the Norwegian peasants travel about the country. Boxes that hold a variety of articles; all their worldly

wardrobe ; food sufficient for a week or a fortnight's consumption, according to the length of the journey they are about to take ; a bottle of beer or the native brandy (of which the less said the better), and a knife to cut the food—a fork is superfluous. With such an outfit, they are independent ; travel a whole week or more by steamer, and incur no expense beyond the passage-money. The Norwegians having very little money, are frugal and provident ; they know its value, and spend nothing in waste. The English, in the same rank of life, might learn a lesson from these descendants of the Vikings.

One of the great trades of Bergen is the stock-fish, into the mysteries of which we gained more insight later on than was agreeable. It is sent to all parts of the world, but chiefly to the Mediterranean and to Spain ; consists of cod-fish salted and dried to the substance of a deal board, and rejoicing in a perfume that keeps you at a respectful distance. Many of the sea boats were in the harbour to-day, with their cargoes of roe and train oil. These arrive during the months of May and June ; in July and August they come in with rock and dried fish. Strange vessels, with high prows rounded at the end, and curling like a dolphin's tail ; differing little in fashion from the dragon ships used by the Vikings a thousand years ago.

At Bergen we were to take passage for the North Cape, a journey of seventeen days to and fro. We had a selection of steamers ; and a Norwegian gentleman to whom we had taken an introduction, showed us great kindness, escorted us about the town, and was of the utmost use to us. Here again we should have been nonplussed without such help, not knowing what to do for the best, and unable to find out: just as, going down the Spirillen, our kind old friend Mr. B. had been everything to us in the first stages of our journey. At the hotel at Bergen no one could give us the slightest information about the North Cape boats, and without Herr T. to pilot us into the right channel, we must have run the risk of a right or wrong choice.

Several companies run their vessels to the Cape. Which boat would be most comfortable, and in which should we gain the pleasantest experience? We decided in favour of the *Michael Krohn*, Captain Björnstad, of which Messrs. Gundersen and Schöning were the agents in Bergen. The Company study the pleasure and accommodation of their passengers. The cabins of the *Michael Krohn*, freshly fitted up, the saloon, decorated with purple velvet cushions, and white and gold panels, had a cheerful appearance not to be resisted. We were fortunate, too, in finding a little cabin vacant ;

the only real little cabin on board, holding four berths, with room for a table, a couple of chairs, and a moderate amount of luggage. This we secured to ourselves by the payment of three fares, according to the advertised rules of the Company: an arrangement which made all the difference to the comfort of the journey.

This matter settled, we returned to shore with Herr T., strolled through the old parts of the town, and visited the picture-gallery, where the name of Jeremiah Brown, Esquire, and his bevy of fair damsels had become historical record. The picture-gallery is not large, and contains no pictures of especial interest; but the Norwegians are not a very artistic people, probably for want of opportunity. It can hardly be from any other cause in so intelligent a race. Their broad, well-developed foreheads denote sense and imagination, minds that ought to be in sympathy with the æsthetic and beautiful. But a taste for the fine arts is not easily gratified, and unless a country patronises her artists, the spirit of emulation, which goes far to produce talent, is checked.

Genius makes its own way, but talent is not genius. The one rises superior to opposition and discouragement, the other often dies for want of support. The strength of the one is derived

from itself; the other must be invigorated from without. The Danes of late years have certainly taken the lead in marine subjects, but England has been their chief patron. To stand before a masterpiece of Sorensen, Bille, or Melbe is to see the moving of the water, hear the surging of the waves, feel the freshening breeze. The Norwegians, on the other hand, give one the impression of a people of great artistic resources as yet undeveloped. The country has little or nothing to help it on; no past school of masters, like Italy, or Holland and Belgium. It is isolated from all such advantages as it is remote from the more refined and civilised countries of the world. Sweden, a step lower down, is in advance of Norway. The latter has not even any architecture to boast of, with the exception of Thronhjelm Cathedral, a building far from perfect in itself. No monuments of antiquity carry you back into the past, no ruins make the romance of the present. Throughout the country you see neither trace nor vestige of architectural beauty, and you long to bring a building such as Westminster, and place it in one of those grand valleys, amidst the eternal mountains and never-ending torrents. You long to bring such an abbey, the glory of man's handiwork, into comparison with those hills, the glory of creation.

Day after day, passing through such scenes, the eye hungers after some grand ruin to break the monotony of this eternal solitude, this unbroken sameness, beautiful as it all is ; longs for a token of the bygone life, activity, and greatness of man. But in vain. What it would be to come upon such ruins as Raglan, or Tintern, or Heidelberg, in these vast stretches of lonely country ; to visit them some night when flooded by moonlight more brilliant than can be conceived in a heavier atmosphere ? People the ruins with an assembly of silent ghosts, creeping out at the witching hour ; see them cross the moonlit plain in solemn gray procession and disappear amidst the vast forests upon the slopes ; watch until they issue forth again upon the mountain tops, stretching out weird arms, working spells, or performing penances ; until, at the first flush of dawn, they hasten back affrighted to their silent tombs.

We may imagine all this, but we do not see it. The Norwegians have not any past history of this kind—they never will have—and probably no one thinks about it, or regrets it less than they do themselves. Life for them is, of necessity, practical : I do not believe it is of choice. I have already remarked that Norway owes nothing to man ; her attractions are all her own ; they date farther back than all ruins, and will be in existence when the

proud ruins of other countries have crumbled away.

The days we spent in Bergen were supremely hot, and it was difficult to stir about. We longed for the time when we should be upon the water, revelling in such breezes as might be wafted to us straight from the North Pole. Yet, after a week of comparative isolation from one's fellows, a week of uninterrupted and desolate country, the change to the bright, quaint town, a return to something like civilisation and mankind, had been very pleasant. On the Wednesday night we went to take our leave of Herr T., sat an hour with him on the verandah of his house, overlooking his gardens, and the mountains across the water, down which of course trickled the inevitable waterfall, and almost regretted the "bon voyage" which consigned us to the less certain because untried quarters of our vessel.

The clocks were striking eleven when we went on board. The steamer, advertised to start at midnight, was of course behind time; no chance of her moving for some hours. We turned in, therefore, but with small prospect of rest. Incessant noise went on; shouting, talking, disputing, and taking in cargo; whilst the "donkey engine" might have been sounds issuing from the infernal regions. At

length, about 5 a.m., there were signs of motion. Going up on deck to reconnoitre, we found the good vessel making way through the forest of ships with the usual difficulties.

Nothing could exceed the beauty of the sky. Dream clouds, rose-coloured and ethereal, were floating over a surface of liquid, transparent blue. The fresh invigorating breeze of the early morning was especially delightful and exhilarating after the heat of the past two days. We took our last view of the mountains, the town, and the red-roofed houses upon the slopes, that make Bergen so quaint and picturesque. Then, turning to the right, all went out of view as the good ship *Michael Krohn* steamed northwards.

CHAPTER VII.

THE *MICHAEL KROHN* — FLOROEN — HORNELEN — MÖLDOEN —
MOLDE—CHRISTIANSUND—A WATER FUNERAL—THRONDHJEM.

FEW things of their kind are pleasanter than a voyage to the North Cape. Much may be said in its favour—little in opposition. It is quite a different experience from most of the sea voyages usually taken for health or amusement. The very word Voyage is suggestive to many of infinite terrors; the misery of *mal de mer*; the monotony of endless days that succeed and resemble each other; the unbroken sameness of a great waste of sea and sky, varied only by a greater waste of black darkness in the long night watches. Even a journey across the Atlantic, which may now be almost numbered by hours, is too much for the courage of many to contemplate.

But a journey from Bergen to the North Cape requires no courage whatever. From first to last you are almost continually in smooth seas. The worst of sailors need fear no ill. There are, now

and again, short interregnums of a little roughness, when the good ship lets you know that she could do her part at pitching and rolling, if the chance were given her; but these occasions are rare, and quickly over. Ere you are able to think the change is not for the better, the capricious mood has once more passed into the Elysium of calm waters.

And there is no monotony in this voyage. Everything is variety. The attention and interest are for ever being aroused and kept awake. It is a constant steaming near shore, passing through long channels, land-bound on the one hand, protected by high rocks on the other, that shut out the sea beyond. That sea may be tossing and tumbling in heaving billows and angry waves; they cannot reach you. Your course lies amidst small green islands, hot and glistening in the sunshine, charming the imagination, and throwing a glow over the whole man—body, soul, and spirit—that makes the fact of existence sufficient happiness for the time being. Small green islands, here and there crowned by a lighthouse; fishing stations, where the dried cod are piled in many and huge stacks, charging the breeze with odours no fancy could describe as scent-laden, so subtle and detestable is the smell. Islands, again, that are uninhabited

patches of green earth, not in any way utilised. They serve no purpose, and might as well go down to the bottom and join the weeds and anemones, the coral rocks and reefs, haunted by those syrens, the mermaids, and be no more seen.

The waters, too, up here are often so transparent, so pure and pale a green, that it is possible to see far into their depths. Near the shore you may trace the beauties that lie at the bottom, and think the sight more splendid than the most gorgeous dream of fairyland that ever dazzled the mind of youth or age. Indeed, whilst gazing at these wonders, we become children again, with all the freshness of feeling, the love of the marvellous, that seldom survives the test of maturer years. If it be true that in some things, "Once a child always a child," surely it is in its penalties more than its pleasures that we pay for this evergreen state of existence.

But that first morning after leaving Bergen all was pleasure to us, pure and unalloyed. Life for the moment was rose-coloured and ethereal as the dream-clouds that flitted about the sky and gradually faded—like most of our day-dreams—into thin air. The sun threw over the atmosphere an Eastern warmth of colouring that charmed and almost intoxicated the senses. It

was not always so, and the reverse of the picture was bad enough to endure; but it was so to-day and for several days. Let us make the most of it.

We steamed away in the good ship *Michael Krohn*, Captain Björnstad. Let it be stated, once and for all, that nothing could have exceeded the kindness and courtesy of the captain to his passengers. During the whole voyage he did everything in his power to please; showed them all that could be seen; occasionally went out of his course for their especial gratification; did all he could (and what a task it was!) to satisfy that craving for novelty which so frequently fastens upon travellers, and makes them so truly wretched if they have left a celebrated stone unturned, a wonderful fossil unseen, or a preserved mummy unvisited. A craving that will not be satisfied in its unreasoning, but fastens upon the victim, as the *mal du pays* seizes upon the poor Savoyard, and breaks his heart if it is not arrested by a return to his beloved mountains. Difficult as the captain's task was, he performed it well, and from first to last was uniformly considerate, amiable, and polite. The same must be said of the other officers of the ship. We embarked from Bergen, but most of the passengers joined at Thronhjem.

Steering to the right after getting clear of Bergen, we were soon amongst the islands that dot and decorate these waters, and passed the entrance to the Sogne Fjord. Our first call was at Floröen, a small island of some importance, containing nearly five hundred inhabitants—its chief trade a herring fishery. Beyond, to the west, on a rock jutting sharply out of the sea, was perched a lighthouse, and so rough is the water at times that the keepers for days together can hold no communication with the island that is but a few yards distant.

It was far otherwise to-day. The sea was shimmering in the sunlight; a golden haze blotted out the distance, and near at hand the island and the lighthouse formed a picture of quiet solitary repose. Where the five hundred people had bestowed themselves was a mystery; not five were visible. To our right, as we went on and on, the land for ever stretched away; to our left, great rocks and cliffs, towering bulwarks, rose to immense heights. The mainland sloped upwards, now green and dotted with hamlets, now presenting a barren, rocky surface, scarcely a patch of lichen varying its dull monotony. In the afternoon we passed Hornelen, the highest rock in Norway, a gigantic wall rising some 2500 feet out of the water. The captain stopped

the vessel, blew a shrill blast upon the whistle, and the echo was marvellously repeated from point to point, from crag and hollow, flitting about like a phantom will-o'-the-wisp. Then, shooting across a rapid, to the entrance of the beautiful little Nordfjord, whose slopes on either side were clothed with pine trees that fringed the summits of the hills, we stopped at Møldøen.

This, too, is an important fishing station, though less in the direct route of the steamers than Florøen. A telegram was handed to the captain from a wedding party, asking him when he passed their little settlement if he would dress the ship and salute them. Presently we came upon the wedding group. A small assemblage of people on the green slopes, decked out in quaint costumes, surrounded the bride and bridegroom, who stood the conscious centre of attraction—the former wearing the large orthodox crown usual to such festal occasions. The boat stopped, and up went the flags, stretching from the decks to the mast-heads.

Meanwhile the greatest excitement of which Norwegians are capable possessed the little band on shore. They shouted and hurrahed lustily. A red flag, evidently the impromptu performance of some native genius, was hoisted on a long pole, and

fluttered gracefully in the air. Then one of the young men let off a gun, and above the heads of the happy couple we traced the thin line of smoke, almost before the report reached us. After this we went on our way, and the gratified concourse returned to the bride's house. If this was the first day of the revels, they would probably last two more, and the whole thing would end by some one unloosening the pin that held the crown together, the bride continuing to dance until she danced it off—a signal for the music to cease abruptly, a sudden hush to fall, and the company to disperse in silence. Strange that so sensible unemotional, a race as the Norwegians should celebrate their weddings by a three days' uninterrupted festivity that seems more in accordance with the warm Spanish or Italian temperament, than that of this fair, pale people of the North.

Throughout that day we were steaming amidst these islands and rocks, which every now and then fell away, and gave us a view of the sea beyond, always calm and smooth as a painted ocean. As the sun went down, the colouring on land and sea became gorgeous. Flames of red shot across the sky, and a crimson flush overspread the water. The tones deepened, and every moment changed, wave upon wave of colour seem-



A WEDDING PARTY.

ing to chase each other, as the waves of the sea follow in quick succession.

We were not yet in the regions of the mid-night sun, but quite dark it did not become. A weird twilight fell upon land and water, increasing in size the rocks and the hills, veiling but not concealing them. The sky was still luminous, when we turned in, simply because rest was a duty, not because there was nothing more to see.

Our first stage next morning was Molde, by some thought the most beautifully situated of all the towns on the north coast. Certainly nothing can well surpass it in loveliness. Entering the narrow fjord, with its pine-clad banks, the town opened up, many of its houses almost overhanging the water. The sloping hills, rising to immense heights, were of richer verdure than is generally seen in Norway. On the opposite side of the harbour towered the mountains at the head of the Romsdal, jagged and abrupt in outline, the gigantic Romdalshorn conspicuous amongst them. There was a charm about the place that tempted one to land. It is an excellent spot in which to pitch one's tent for a time, so numerous and interesting are the neighbouring excursions. But we, bound for the savage grandeur and bleak heights of

the North Cape, could not stop short in this laughing, luxuriant, and comparatively luxurious spot. So when the good steamer turned on her onward journey, we accompanied her.

Some hours later in the morning we reached Christiansund, an important town, built upon three islands, forming an immense amphitheatre of hills so placed as to afford the town a natural and secure harbour. A subdued excitement seemed to possess the place. Huge branches of trees were hung in many directions, and all had the appearance of an approaching gala. But we soon found that the fête was to be nothing less solemn than a funeral. One of the chief men of Christiansund had died, and was about to be buried. His body was to be conveyed across the waters of the bay to the church, where the funeral ceremony would take place. As only the principal island has a church, when any one dies on either of the other islands, the body has to be brought over by water for interment.

The day was intensely hot; a brilliant sun, a cloudless sky; not a breath of air stirred the landlocked, hill-sheltered bay. All nature rejoiced in warmth and prosperity. The houses on the slopes, one above another, looked white and tranquil. Nothing could be less in harmony with the ceremony about to take place. Not an object reminded us

this glorious day, so instinct with life and beauty, that death and decay are the common heritage of all.

In the distance, on the opposite side of the water, a crowd of people could be discerned, quiet, motionless. A landing-stage decked with green boughs and garlands, terminated at the water's edge in an arch of green leaves. At the foot of the landing-stage some eight or ten boats were in waiting.

Suddenly there was a slight stir in the crowd. The coffin was being borne on men's shoulders down to its appointed boat. A few moments more, and the cortége set out. The first boat contained the musicians, and anything more sad, solemn, and mournful than the dirge they played could not be imagined. It was distressing in its wailing gloom and misery. A certain occasional discord mingled with the harmony, the very embodiment of despair and heartbroken sorrow.

Immediately following the musicians was a boat richly decorated with garlands of leaves and flowers in the form of a canopy, that might rather have decked a bride than the dead. Below this gorgeous and beautiful canopy, covered by no pall, cumbered by no trappings, reposed the coffin. The boat had all the appearance of a triumphal barge.

The sight was one of the strangest, most inter-

esting, most impressive I had ever seen—perhaps from its very novelty—this quaint mode of burying the dead. For a quarter of an hour we watched the procession in its slow, stately, and solemn march. The oars muffled, not a sound marked its progress save the wail of the music, which never ceased its melancholy strains. Every time the discord occurred, it jarred the feelings and sent a shiver through the frame no self-control could check. On and on they went, boat after boat, that containing the coffin always most conspicuous, the eye ever reverting to it with a mournful fascination.

The procession passed onwards until it entered a narrow canal between the islands and was lost to view. Less and less distinct, slower and slower grew the wailing sounds of the instruments, until they ceased altogether. Then we knew that the procession was landing, and was about to make its way on foot to the church.

Somehow a little of the brightness had gone out of the sunshine. All this should have taken place with skies weeping in harmony with the feelings of the mourners. This laughing sun, this gorgeous aspect of nature, must have seemed almost to mock the hearts of the smitten. And yet, to us who looked on, it no doubt made it infinitely more solemn.

A state funeral at Westminster, with all the glitter of pomp and ceremony, the stirring strains of the "Dead March," had never impressed me as did this simple procession. It threw a certain unfading association over the mind in connection with Christiansund. This water-funeral remains amongst the most vivid and distinct, most interesting, most solemn recollections I have kept of Norway.

Yet the practical and the emotional, the sublime and the ridiculous, the spiritual and the temporal, for ever go hand in hand, in what, according to Die Vernon, the good vicar's wife would have called this "'varsal world." No sooner had the melancholy procession passed out of sight, its effect yet full upon the mind, than the captain beckoned me to the other side of the ship, over which he was leaning with what looked very much like an eye to a bargain.

At the foot of the ladder was a boat filled with splendid lobsters, and the price asked was fourpence apiece—the orthodox charge, it will be remembered, for a good lobster in Norway. Not a few of them quickly changed hands. Indeed, from Bergen to Thronthjem we half lived upon lobsters; but from thence to the North Cape we saw them not. Salmon in abundance and daily; but the Norwegian salmon has not the fine flavour of the English. If

a good Severn fish were put before a Norwegian, I am not sure that he would know what to call it. It is generally so when nature is abundant in her supplies. Where peaches and apricots grow thickest in the orchards of France they are the least luscious of their species.

Leaving Christiansund, its melancholy but interesting associations, we steamed towards Throndhjem. The journey was interesting at every point. To the south-west of Christiansund is the Island of Averöen, and in a mountain overlooking the village of Braemnaes is a cavern said to be the largest known cave in Norway, the opening of which is 40 feet wide, and the interior 280 feet high. We were continually steering about the islands; now stopping at some small station, and taking in bales and boxes for the most part sent off in boats from the shore, and now steaming onwards again; the whole time close to land, and sometimes in very shallow waters. The air was warm, yet bracing; full of that lightness which accompanies a rarified atmosphere, and forbids the indulgence of melancholy, or what Dr. Johnson would have called the vapours. Let no one who wishes to indulge, like Harvey, in morbid meditations, or a pessimist's view of life, venture into these latitudes. His moods and misanthropy will fall from him in spite of himself, and

he will see all things in a new and more healthy light.

Evening grew apace and night came on, but darkness fell not. As we approached the region of the Arctic Circle darkness fled away. It was difficult to realise time. When at midnight we could read as plainly as at midday, the world seemed to have got out of joint. The effect was unfamiliar, and a little embarrassing. Especially we did not know when to turn in, and once more were able to feel very juvenile, going to bed by daylight.

To-night there was sunset, certainly. And here it may be remarked that the greatest effects, the most gorgeous colourings, are not those of the midnight sun, which never disappears, but rather the effects of those latitudes where the sun dips below the horizon and soon returns. It was always immediately after sunset that we had those wonderful and vivid skies, where each moment saw a change that startled one with its beauty.

So was it this night before reaching Thronhjelm. The sun sank to the horizon, shot below it, and the whole sky became suffused with a glorious light. Clouds flecked with gold floated in mid-air; triumphal cars in which angels might have wafted departed spirits to paradise. Streaks of crimson, almost like an aurora borealis, shot

upwards into the heavens. Where the sun had disappeared, seven rays, a crimson aureole, ascended, changing colour momentarily and deepening to a blood red. In the East an emerald green, calm and beautiful, contrasted with all this most fiery, most passionate effect. The water reflected all the colours of the sky, and the land was bathed in rosy light.



MUNKHOLMEN.

But to-night the sun went too far down ; all the beauty faded from land and sea ; the fierce passion of the sky died out. Yet no darkness came ; the pale green light in the east lived through it all. Towards one o'clock the steamer passed through the narrow channel of the Throndhjem waters into the broad bay ; passed the fort of Munkholmen, that had once upon a time been a monastery. The

ancient capital opened up its long line of houses upon the shore, its background of green hills, steeped to-night in the intense repose and solitude of twilight gloom. Its churches upreared their heads above the houses of the town, the venerable cathedral in their centre keeping guard over them like a good shepherd watching his flock. Onwards, a little farther, until we reached the landing-stage of the steamers alongside the town. As the clocks struck one in the morning, in gradually increasing light, we dropped anchor, and the vessel was at rest.

So were not we. It had been impossible to turn in during the changes of sunset. When all that was over, we were near Throndhjem, and with a desire that was half a weakness, felt unable to go below until we had caught a first glimpse of the home of the ancient kings of Norway. Now when increasing daylight and the approaching sunrise should have brought us back to the world, we went down; and so, like the children in their play, did things by the rules of *contrairy*. The vessel would stay the whole of the next day (or rather that day) at Throndhjem, and we had time before us for seeing the capital. If we wished to have energy also, it must be sought in repose.

Some hours later, when once more on deck,

the world was astir, the sun already high in the heavens. As we went down the gangway on to the road, one might almost have fancied a subterranean fire burning beneath, soon to reach the surface. The fire, however, was overhead, and increased as it neared the meridian. The streets of Throndhjem were passable only to such



THRONDHJEM.

as, like ourselves, had but the one day to devote to them.

The town has little in itself to attract attention. Founded about the year 1000, it has so often been destroyed by fire, that few traces of its antiquity remain. The streets are wide and regular, the houses for the most part built of brick or stone; the wooden aspect, so characteristic of Norway and so quaint, is here found wanting.

So far, one is disappointed in Thronthjem. It has held an important place in early Norwegian history. One's ideas of it have been formed in imagination at the impressionable age when Andersen's Tales are accepted in faith. The mind is imbued with a vision of all that is old and much that is miraculous—from a fairy-tale point of view. Therefore, awakening to the discovery that the ancient town, with its rich, grand, rolling name, its tradition of wise men—the most northern of the larger towns of Europe—would not be out of place in any of the southern towns of this quarter of the globe, gives rather a rude shock to the feelings; bewilders the imagination, disturbs the boundary mark between fact and fancy, and causes a little of the romance attending this wonderful country to melt away, just as everything is at present melting away under the influence of the midday sun.

We found ourselves in the market-place; a large, wide square from which the four leading thoroughfares of Thronthjem open out. It was modern as anything you could wish to see; was half covered with booths and stalls, the buyers and sellers not even clad in any special costume to render them distinctive or picturesque, or even ugly. At the end of one of these thoroughfares stood the

cathedral, the special attraction of Throndhjem ; its glory, as it is that of Norway; the one solitary piece of architecture that it possesses.

Only in its first impression is Throndhjem disappointing. The cathedral makes up for a great deal, and, once visited, memory fastens upon this piece of antiquity for its association with the ancient capital.

And again, though the actual situation of the town is not so picturesque as that of Bergen, yet the neighbourhood of Throndhjem is full of beauty; more luxuriant and fertile than anything we had yet seen in Norway. Situated at the mouth of the Nid, during the first four centuries of its existence it was called Nidaros. Throndhjem signifies "The Throne's Home." Here all the kings are crowned. But at the union of Sweden with Norway it ceased to be the capital, the seat of Government, and the Royal Residence. So far its glory has departed.

They could not remove the cathedral, which remains as a last vestige of that ancient magnificence. It has long been undergoing repair, and will probably remain in this transition state for years to come. We can no longer see it in the beauty of its age, and presently it will appear only in the light of its restoration. We have but to call to

mind some of our own restored cathedrals—such, for instance, as Canterbury—to know how far the one beauty falls short of the other. For if age destroys, it also gives a charm entirely its own, beyond compare, romantic and refined, taking you



THRONDHJEM CATHEDRAL.

at once back to the early ages of the world, when there were giants in the land, not of stature, but of intellect; when there was leisure and opportunity to raise such temples as the world will not see again.

Like the town, the cathedral has several times suffered by fire. It is now a mixture of different styles of architecture, the Norman the earliest and most prominent, but more ornamented than any

to be found in England. On entering the church, the eye is startled and arrested by this meeting, not blending, of distinct periods, Norman, Byzan-



INTERIOR, LOOKING EASTWARD.

tine, and Gothic. When we saw it the interior was so boarded off for repairs, so cut up into divisions, that all sense of space and grandeur was lost. At a first glance you are disappointed. Only when you begin to examine the tracery of some of the

work, the well-proportioned arches, the delicately-cut niches, the small but beautiful chapels, do you begin to see what it might have been at one period of its history, and what it may yet in part become.

About the exterior, too, there is not that imposing effect, that unity of idea, seen in our own cathedrals. Before it the mind finds itself neither mute nor transfixed, as in the presence of buildings so perfect as the cathedrals of Nôtre Dame, Amiens, or Westminster Abbey. The church, cruciform in shape, is built of a dark, blueish stone, obtained from the neighbourhood, unromantic as the slated roof of a London house. The eye is rather startled by quaintness than gratified by beauty. But gradually the different portions begin to harmonise, and, noting the merit of much of the work, you end by being to some extent charmed. The octagonal, bulb-like cupola, which added to the character of the building, has been removed to give place to a small, tame spire, whilst the flying buttresses are too thin and delicate to be in harmony with the rest of the structure. The centre tower, once crowned by a spire, has now only a small, squat roof of slate, which dwarfs the whole edifice, and offends the eye.

The north doorway, and indeed the whole of that part, is perfect, and the work is very fine. But the south side is more satisfactory, because

■ more harmonious ; the least tampered with. Here
■ we lingered long, going back in imagination to
■ the days when pilgrims flocked from all parts of
■ Europe to the shrine of St. Olaf, and wore away
■ the stones in their devotion ; until, in the course of
■ time, a new era gave place to a higher and more
■ enlightened state of things, and the establishment
, of the Lutheran creed in Norway turned the pilgrim
tide towards other lands.

Entering the cathedral, the first thing to arrest attention was a large figure of the Saviour over the altar, in white marble ; a copy of Thorvaldsen's masterpiece, and presented by him to the church. From the blocking up of the arches, little of the interior could be seen at one time. No doubt, when all is finished, it will be an imposing building for its size, but that time is probably yet distant. Like the famous cathedral of Cologne, it can only progress as funds fall in, and these golden streams in a country such as Norway are less rapid and abundant than the silver streams of her mountain torrents. The wealth of the people is in inverse ratio to their goodwill.

Coming out from the coolness and gloom of the interior, to the broad glare of the sun, we were just in time to see a funeral issuing from the mortuary chapel attached to the cathedral, but having a sepa-

rate entrance. The grave was only a few feet away. The coffin was covered with flowers, which were lowered with it into the grave. The minister was dressed in the picturesque costume of his order; a long black robe, and a snow-white Elizabethan ruffle, which gave solemn dignity to his appearance. The mourners, dressed in black, stood round the grave, looking very matter-of-fact, and by no means grief-stricken. The minister gave a short discourse; they sang one or two hymns in composed, well-controlled voices; all was over, and they departed. How different from the ceremony we had seen at Christiansund, and how far less impressive! Later on in the day, strolling again through the cemetery, we saw that the flowers had been raised from the coffin and placed beside the still open grave. They were fastened to a frame, and it gave one a slight shock to find them artificial. The unrealities of life follow even in the great reality of death.

Behind and beyond the town of Throndhjem lie sleeping hills, cultivated fields, and wayside banks rich in wild flowers. Villas and country houses, embowered in trees, gladden the eyes of an Englishman. Here the grim fir gives place to wide-spreading branches, and, amidst others, the chestnut stands out conspicuously. In the

neighbourhood are two wonderful falls, for which we started in the afternoon in a large, rumbling, heavy barouche with flaming cushions, a pair of horses, heavy as the carriage, and a coachman who was the biggest man we had ever seen in Norway or elsewhere—all supplied by the hotel.

We rattled over the stones, awaking echoes in the almost deserted streets, and were soon galloping over a white road, raising clouds of blinding dust. The drive itself would have been sufficient recompense, without the grand falls at the end. Behind lay the town, in a hollow, hot and sleepy. Surrounding us were hills, green and fertile, and verdant slopes—almost an English pastoral scene; houses, white and imposing, stood out in contrast with green lawns and waving trees. Ascending, we looked down to the right upon the Nid, that ran over its rocky bed in white foam, hurrying impatiently towards the sea, as if tired of its own existence. Then turning into another road we descended rapidly, and came upon the first of the two great falls. The carriage drew up at the blacksmith's forge, and passing on to a platform, we found ourselves within a few feet of the water.

Its beauty had not been exaggerated. With

an overwhelming roar the river suddenly leaped in its bed a distance of eighty feet, an immense volume of water, out of which stood enormous rocks. It is 122 feet wide, and the spray ascended in huge clouds. The torrent, force, and noise of



LOWER FALL,

the water were almost overwhelming. The forge buildings added not a little to the picturesque scene—their blackness standing out in strange contrast with the foam—than which Nature has nothing whiter, surpassing even the purity of snow itself.

The second fall was farther on, and our Jehu, leaving his horses in charge of the forge, conducted us part of the way. A steep rough road,

leading through a small plantation, landed us on a level with the bed of the river. Huge boulders and loose stones did their best to stay our progress; but at last, looking up, there before us was the second and yet grander fall. Leaping a



UPPER FALL.

depth of one hundred feet, over four hundred feet wide, this mass of water amazed one by its wonderful strength and beauty. Broken in the middle by an immense mass of rock, the upper part seemed divided into two cataracts, which united again in falling. In volume of water it was far beyond anything we had yet seen in Norway.

We stood long watching this seething mass

pouring itself with a sound of many thunders into the lower bed of the river, the spray ascending in columns that the rays of the sun tinged with all the hues of the rainbow. Down and down the water rushed, with that ceaseless flow, that never-ending roar that drives some people to madness. We stayed until the bewildered stage had set in, and then went back over the boulders, jumping from one to another, sometimes missing and splashing into the shallow water. Up through the plantation, and at the forge we found our lumbering vehicle. It would have done well for the state carriage of some bear-hunting Norwegian baron, and might certainly have dated back to the deluge, whilst her son of Anak ought to have lived in the days when there were giants in the land.

We went back to Thronhjøm by the way we came, and presently found ourselves at the top of the hill, overlooking the town, the harbour, and the far-off sea. Once more we rattled through the streets, with a noise that almost rivalled the thunder of the waterfalls, and the coachman put us down outside the graveyard of the cathedral for a last long look at the old gray walls. A short walk through the market, now free of booths and stalls, buyers and sellers, and we found ourselves within the Britannia Hotel—a pleasant house, as became

its name—a Parisian building, as befitted the honour of an ancient capital. But the dinner they gave us was excellent only in its charges. We were but three in number—the third a German officer who had joined the ship at Aalesund, and accompanied us to the North Cape. Table d'hôte was over, and probably they were not equal to two great efforts in one day. No exception could be taken to the dining-room; panelled with polished pine, it was deliciously cool and comfortable.

Late in the evening we found ourselves once more at our rallying point—the now familiar decks of the *Michael Krohn*. A goodly number of passengers had joined, most of them English, and all bound for the North Cape. Every berth was now occupied. The comparative repose, the sacred feeling of semi-retirement, enjoyed since Wednesday—which had been so pleasant, making the journey up to this time as quiet and orderly as if we had been in our own yacht—was at an end.

At midnight the last passenger was on board; the last box of cargo in the hold; the gangway was withdrawn; the whistle sounded for the third time, the anchor was weighed; the paddles turned in the water. In the pale light of the midnight sky we started once more on our journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROERVIK—GUDVIK—WHALES OR PORPOISES—TORGHATTEN—A
PLEASANT EXCURSION—HALSOUND—A SAD EVENT—THE
HESTMAND—BÖDÖ—THE LOFODENS—KOBERRVAES.

A STRANGE peculiarity amongst the Norwegians is their apparent ability to do without sleep during the long light nights of summer. At midnight, at two or four in the morning, they seemed as wide awake as at mid-day. This was so generally the case, that at last we began to wonder whether they slept at all during these months—making up for lost time, like the tortoise, by burrowing out of sight when the cold and darkness of winter entered upon their reign.

To some extent we were also afflicted with this same malady of insomnia. Night after night the constant daylight and ever-shifting scenes robbed us of all wish and ability to seek the rest Nature has provided for her children. And even in slumber, when tardily wooed and won, there lurked an unpleasant consciousness that it was still broad day-

light. Thus, when in due time and place there came a return to one's natural state of darkness, it met with the welcome reserved for an old friend.

We left Thronhjelm about midnight. Twilight wrapped the town and surrounding hills in silence—twilight that was neither that which precedes darkness nor dawn, but was of a more unearthly aspect than either. This truly was “neither night nor day.” It cast a pale shadow upon the faces of the little crowd on the lower decks, who had escorted their friends to the boat; friends bound for one or other of the ports at which we should touch on our way northwards.

The Norwegians are wonderful people for saying farewell. For so unemotional a race they characterise their partings by a large amount of demonstration; wringing of hands and embracings, huggings and claspings multiplying themselves ad infinitum. So was it to-night, until the captain, half laughing, half impatient, would wait no longer, and, sounding the whistle for the third time, ordered the gangway to be withdrawn. Upon this ensued last embraces, tearings asunder, and a scramble for shore. Then all grew suddenly quiet, old men and women, young men and maidens, as they watched us depart—a pale shadow, as I have said, cast by this mysterious twilight upon their ghostly faces.

As the men bowed solemnly—as only Norwegians can bow—they might in the silence of this weird light have been saluting phantoms of another world. Half instinctively one looked eastward, expecting that this light, not of earth, had thrown back the closed portals, and opened to one's second sight a celestial vision. All above, however, was blank though lovely space.

We hurried out into the broad waters, and were fairly away. The town receded, the crowd diminished and disappeared, the vision faded, and we went below, night and darkness now left behind.

Some hours later, once more on deck, all sense of mystery had departed with the twilight. The rocky, barren coast, looked full of beauty and repose in the rarefied air. All the morning we were winding in and out of islands, through narrow channels, where we could almost touch the land on either side, and where the emerald water was cool and transparent. Wherever the rocks and islands opened out, we came into full view of the sea, calm, beautiful, and hazy, sparkling with countless sun flashes.

Passing at length through a narrow channel, we stopped at Roervik, a spot more really Norwegian than anything we had seen since leaving Bergen. Bright red houses, overhanging the water

and on the slopes, harmonised well with the green background of the hills ; hills so artistically grouped, so full of graceful outline, it was difficult to believe their arrangement accidental. The many-coloured boats lying about the little harbour added to the liveliness of the scene ; the intensely clear air threw a charm over all, not to be realised until it has been felt and seen. One's ordinary life and breathing seemed suspended ; the days passed here must not be counted as days in which we grew older ; time was not. Like the sun on the dial of Ahaz our lives went back ten degrees. It was dream-land ; and, for the time being, we were dream people.

We landed two quaint Norwegian carts, took on board a boatful of boxes, and started on our way to Gudvik ; a little spot far less picturesque than Roervik. But in this shimmering atmosphere, this air that almost seemed to endow one with the powers of flying, every place was beautiful ; the smallest house or boat, a speck upon the horizon, the most trifling detail, became interesting.

After this we found ourselves for a time in the open sea. Here we encountered many porpoises, that dodged about and shot under our bows with amazing swiftness. When the first was seen, an excited cry of "A whale ! A whale !" was

raised. The passengers charged from one end of the vessel to the other, and some of the ladies who had been taking a siesta, hastened up the staircase, with an agonised cry of "Where? Where?" fearing the monster might disappear unseen. Then the porpoise obligingly rolled into sight again for a moment, amidst a universal cry of "There he is!" The ladies excitedly congratulated each other, whilst the gentlemen, with dignity befitting the sterner sex, merely exchanged glances that seemed to say they had not come up to the north seas for nothing.

All this time I had been on the bridge with the captain, and we were unfeeling enough to enjoy the scene and make no sign. But presently, when more porpoises appeared and crossed our path, a young and pretty American girl who had been silently cogitating for some time, uttered aloud this monstrous and seditious reflection :

"Do you think, sister, that the whale was only a porpoise after all?"

Soon after this little diversion, looking out to sea, we espied what at first was taken to be land and rocks. But the vision changed and shifted, expanded and contracted, and we saw that we were looking at a mirage. For a second time all was excitement. Marvellous as the great whale had been, this was still more so, and certainly was more curious and

beautiful. Only in the most rarefied air does the mirage show itself. The water everywhere reflected a white heat and glare; and between us and the mirage the atmosphere seemed to waver and vibrate. Rocks and trees were distinctly outlined, now shooting upwards to considerable height, now suddenly dwarfing. The most curious reflection was that of a vessel in full sail, reversed, the masts pointing downwards. Here at last was the phantom ship ready for the dream people; perhaps the vision that the little pale-faced crowd at Thronthjem had seen and bowed to in the weird midnight light.

The mirage seldom occurs, even in these latitudes, and whilst some on board declared it to be a sign of fine weather, others affirmed the contrary. The captain, on being consulted, replied with the spirit of a Delphic oracle: "After a mirage I have known it fine, and I have known it wet." Upon this the deputation withdrew with relieved faces, and the captain whispered to me: "More often wet than fine, but I would not say so." Perhaps he was right not to cast even the shadow of a gloom upon that glorious day.

And now in the distance, rising out of the water, we saw the celebrated mountain of *Torghatten*, possessing a natural tunnel through the centre, and showing, even from the ship, a large square opening

with a clear background of sky. It rises, a gigantic mass of 800 feet, out of the water. The surrounding shore is rocky and shallow, and only in fine weather is it possible to land. To-day, of all days, had been



TORGHATTEN (from the West).

made for the expedition, and towards evening we dropped anchor and went off in the ship's boats.

We scrambled on to the rocks jutting out of the water, and so on to land—terra firma it could hardly be considered. The chief officer was well acquainted with the bearings of the place, and under his pilotage some gained the slopes and began to climb towards the tunnel. Others, self-willed and

independent, followed their own course, fell into bogs and marshes, and finally were glad to be brought round into a safer pathway.

A steep climb of some 400 feet led to the tunnel, the way overgrown with tangle and wild flowers. The mouth of the cave was an enormous opening 60 feet high, startling by its huge proportions. The sides or walls, flat and perpendicular, might have been cut by human ingenuity. The ground or floor of the tunnel, rough and uneven, was strewn with immense rocks and boulders that in the course of ages have fallen from the roof. Not many ventured to the other end; the gloomy journey of 530 feet was too severe, and even perilous for want of light, to be undertaken. Yet a few went through, and one solitary lady even got half-way. Then her courage vanished, and she with it. The tunnel, only 60 feet high at the east entrance, is nearly 200 feet high in the centre, and 250 feet at the west opening.

From the farther end, looking upwards, was like gazing into the roof of some grand cathedral of nature; a temple in which the Druids might have performed their mystic rites to the chant of an ever-beating sea. Far down at our feet we looked upon a tiny house and harbour, a few boats lying quietly at anchor. A square piece of flat rock on the wall

to the left bore the name of Oscar, and above it a crown, traced by the king's hand. The sea, calm



TORGHATTEN (portion of Interior of Tunnel).

as a mirror, and expansive, was gaining the repose of evening.

A young flaxen-haired Norwegian had startled us by flying through the tunnel, jumping from rock to rock and stone to stone almost with the speed of an arrow and the sure-footedness of the deer. How

he did it in the gloom, never pausing, never missing his mark, was a marvel to every one but himself. He returned almost as quickly. They were now beckoning from the other entrance, their forms clearly outlined against the pale sky, the captain's voice with a far-off sound hastening us onwards. But we had not the gift of the fair-haired lad, and could attempt nothing in the way of speed. A. and Lieutenant X., our German friend, the stoutest yet most active of our party, started to go round the mountain instead of returning through the tunnel, and the chief officer had difficulty in persuading them to abandon the attempt. They would certainly have been left behind to await our return from the North Cape, with time and opportunity to reflect upon the folly of setting out on unknown expeditions without first counting the cost.

Once more at the entrance of the tunnel, the steamer, riding at anchor and awaiting our return in patience, was a welcome sight. Somehow, in these expeditions, where you lose sight of your vessel, the only thing that prevents you from being cut off from the world, a nervous fear overtakes you lest, on returning, it should have broken loose or disappeared altogether. Reading *Robinson Crusoe* in one's boyhood evidently leaves behind it a life-long impression; a horror of being cast upon a desert island,

though there may be no cannibals to roast you alive. But our boat was there, floating like a cork upon the waters, a beautiful object, full of life and grace. To reach the foot of the mountain, put off in the boats, and find ourselves on deck, was a short and easy



A LONELY SPOT.

matter. This visit to a mountain island in the far north had been a pleasant experience in the journey.

We were soon on our way to the next station, Quello. Again with sunset, land, islands, and water were all steeped in glowing crimson light. Where ripples came they came in flashes of red. The sky seemed to reflect all the prismatic colours, from dark violet to the purest aquamarine, loveliest of tints.

Again flaming streaks flashed across the heaven, changing with every moment. It seemed as if these glorious phenomena of nature—I can call them by no other name—spoke to the world in a language for which words were unneeded. If volumes were



ROMSDALSHORN.

written about these sunsets in the North Sea, if all the superlative adjectives were exhausted in their praise, description would yet fall infinitely short of their beauty. To really enjoy them and feel their power, it was only possible to gaze in silence—and, if it might be, in solitude: nothing before you but the grand, incomprehensible glory.

To-night, though not yet within the Arctic Circle,

the sun did not disappear for long. With his reappearance this wealth of shades and tones died out, to give place to the more certain light. Before this, Lieutenant X. and A. had gone down, and, indifferent for the time being to the romantic and beautiful in nature, were pledging each other in nothing nearer to nectar than Norwegian beer. It was hard lines upon Herr X., this voyage. When he joined at Aalesund every berth on board was taken, and they had to make up one for him in the saloon, in company with four or five other passengers. Turn in at what hour he might, he had to turn out again the next morning at six, in order that the saloon might be prepared for breakfast. It was hard lines; but I never found any one take life so good-naturedly; take the rough with the smooth so amiably; submit so patiently to small encroachments upon his rights—encroachments that are quite sure to take place where many passengers are met together, and some, perhaps, exact a little more than their due. Rather an exception to his race, Herr X. was full of gentleness and courtesy. Our chief companion during the voyage, by his keen appreciation of scenery, his humour, his intelligent remarks, his readiness to join in the laugh against himself in his mistakes in speaking English, he contributed much to its enjoyment.

Sunday morning was fine as ever, the sky cloudless; so far the mirage had brought no ill-fortune. But the captain had said that if bad weather came, it would not be for three or four days. Going up on deck we found ourselves at anchor at Halsound, an English settlement given up to the timber trade. In this little bay, close upon the mountains, we were scorched by the heat and blinded by the glare. Yet the place was quaint and pretty, and from the stacks of pine-wood in the timber-yards came a refreshing scent, wafted by the gentlest breeze in the world.

A melancholy incident here cast a temporary gloom over the passengers. Before breakfast the second steward came up and informed us that one of the steerage passengers had just died; a young man of twenty, who had joined the ship at Christiania, in the last stage of consumption—so ill, the doctors feared he might not live to reach home. But he declared he must risk it; he could not die without seeing once more his father and mother. They laid him on a bed between the decks, and he never came up again. During the two days the ship was in Bergen he remained below. Suffocated with heat, and longing for air, he lay; his cry the whole time, Oh that he might live to reach home! None of the passengers on board knew what was taking

place. The whole thing had been kept secret ; and the steward got into trouble for telling the fact when all was over.

The father, happily, had come to meet his son, and joined him at Throndhjem. So, for the last twenty-four hours of his life, the half of his wish was fulfilled. But no doubt in these last hours it was the soft sympathetic hand, the tender voice of the mother he most yearned for. On the Sunday morning, still longing for home, and almost within sight of it, he died. At Halsound they made him a rude coffin of deal planks nailed together, and laid him out ready for landing at the next station, the home he had prayed to reach, and where we were due in the afternoon.

It was a very pretty village, this Halsound, shut out from the sea, sheltered in a leafy nook. Wooded hills lay around, patches of snow in the crevices and on the tops of the mountains, glistening in the sunshine ; a tantalising sight to those who were melting with heat down here in the valley. Timber, sawn into white planks, and stacked in all directions, told how the people spent their lives and earned their daily bread. A good deal of this we shipped, but the coffin was passed quietly on board through the side of the vessel, unseen by most, and left between the decks with its mournful burden.

Off again at twelve o'clock, and, steaming out of the narrow water, we were soon once more amongst the islands, with the broad sea beyond.

About three o'clock we reached the poor fellow's home who had died just six hours before. A boat came alongside, the father got into it, and the rough coffin, covered by a small sheet, was gently placed in after him. Bowing gravely to the captain, the man went off with his burden. We watched the boat until it touched the shore; watched the old mother come out of her cottage, and down the rocky slope; saw her throw upwards her hands and her apron in an agony of despair, as she learned that neither look nor clasp would ever again greet her from her beloved son.

It was a relief to turn once more northward from this melancholy drama, to the brighter scenes around us, where all nature sparkled with life and gaiety, and seemed to call upon us to rejoice with her in her happy mood. Just twelve hours after this, at 3 a.m. on Monday morning, we crossed the Arctic Circle, and at the same moment passed the Hestmand on the Island of Hestmandö, or "Horseman's Island," taking its name from the huge mountainous cliff which rises out of the sea, in supposed resemblance to a rider plunging through the waters.

Wild as ever was the coast-line. High snow mountains, numberless peaks tinged with the rosy light of morning, seemed to stretch backwards into space. Amidst them reposed the enormous Svar-tisen glacier, its blue ice and white snow eternally defying the powers of the sun. This enormous snowfield is said to be six miles in length, from



HESTMAND.

two to four in breadth, and covers a mountain plateau 4000 feet high, its glaciers stretching almost to the seashore.

About 11 o'clock on Monday morning we reached Bødø, landed and posted letters. A small, quiet town of growing importance. Large wooden buildings flourished in modern splendour and magnificent contrast with the small and not very clean-looking

huts and cottages forming the older portion. Behind the town stretched long, flat, uninteresting fields. The streets were almost deserted ; perhaps because it was mid-day and the people were at their dinners ; perhaps because the intense heat was not to be lightly encountered even by the natives. So when the ship's long loud whistle warned us that time was up, we were ready to return. These landings upon terra firma were interludes in the voyage, short but pleasant. The sensation of having steady ground beneath the feet can only be appreciated after a long spell of sailing has rendered it unfamiliar.

Leaving Bödö, we started for the Lofodens, and reached them about 10.30 p.m. On our way we again fell in with many porpoises, but no one attempted a second time to raise a cry of WHALES. The passengers, on the contrary, rather passed them over in silence, and looked the other way, as if it was felt they had been imposing on one another, and "making believe," though without the courage of the pretty American girl to say so. After all, are we not every one of us children of a larger growth, "making believe" all through life ; laughing most when most sad ; shutting our skeletons out of sight, and pretending the closet empty ; putting black for white and white for black, sweet for

bitter and bitter for sweet ; acting so well that at last sometimes we impose even on ourselves ?

But let us turn to realities—those wonderful realities, the Lofodens. Here, at any rate, is neither change, imposition, nor make believe. As I saw them last year, so you may see them next—unchangeable, unchanging. And what a marvellous sight they were ! As we approached they stood out boldly from the midst of the sea, a long unbroken range of massive, granite mountains with sharp cutting peaks. The whole range might have stood for one vast temple of nature “measureless to man.” Perpendicular walls, bold and barren, rising 4000 feet above the water ; rocks bare and savage, or covered with green lichen, visible only on a near approach. The entire length of the Lofoden Islands is about 130 English miles, possessing an area of 1560 square miles, and a population of 20,000 inhabitants. But, for all sign of life and labour, we might have been hastening to an unknown land.

The sun sank behind these bulwarks, the sky and the islands flushed crimson. Before us these wild mountains, behind us those snow-hills stretching into space. Yet it was some disappointment to see the sun disappear behind the Lofodens. There would be no real sunset, and therefore the mid-

night sun, yet we should see no sun at midnight. Practically, for us, the sun had set when he went out of sight.

So we contented ourselves with watching the marvellous tones and colours that enveloped us like the glorious light of a paradise. The most gorgeous Eastern imagery and imagination could do no justice to these brilliant, flickering, changing lights and shadows, all the rose-coloured tints that flashed and sparkled in earth, sea, and sky, in the very air itself, as if the heavens had been one vast diamond shedding its countless rays abroad.

The colours deepened over the Lofodens, which stood out like northern Dolomites, but grander in their situation and entirety, for they might be seen at a glance. When close upon them we steered into a little harbour, where some of the romance was taken out of us by the fearful smell of dried fish which came wafted on the wind; breezes fancy could no longer look upon as rose-coloured or scent-laden. Huge stacks of fish lay upon the rocks, and long strings of them hung up to dry. Above all this, on one of the low green hills, a youth in quaint Lofoden costume was playing upon a pipe, and evidently serenading us. A sylvan sound, and the youth lying idly upon the brow of the hill might have been an Arcadian shepherd; save that in

Arcadia they never could have had this intolerable smell of fish to take the sentiment out of everything.

But what was our surprise in this far northern island, to hear this disciple of Pan go through the airs of *Madame Angot*! Pan, the reed, and the Lofodens, all immediately dissolved in a vision of hot London streets, crowded theatres, and unwearying organ-grinders driving one to madness with their inquisitorial horrors. But as we steamed away, our complement of dried fish in the hold, he returned to his quaint Norske melody, dismissed us with a pleasant recollection, rising upon his feet as we receded, and blowing more lustily until we were out of hearing.

At 1.30 in the night, we all landed at Kobervaes, a station in the Lofodens, for the pleasure of a midnight walk, and to see the ruins of the place, which had recently been partly burnt down. Black and charred remains met our sight. An oil factory had taken fire, and spread quickly to tenements too ready to fall a prey to the flames. It must have been a strange, sad sight, to have watched the blaze in this out-of-the-way spot; kept from spreading only by knocking down some of the houses, and making a wide gap between the fire and the rest of the village.

That midnight walk in that far-away island left a strange feeling behind it. Night only by courtesy, for here, in the regions of the midnight sun, we had not even twilight. We were steaming amongst the Lofodens all the next day—one of the loveliest, most curious, most interesting days of the whole passage; in and out of sounds and harbours of indescribable beauty, amidst waters dazzlingly transparent; sometimes suffocated by the smell of dried fish, sometimes choked by the still worse smell of an oil factory, where black smoke poured out of the chimneys, and darkened our beautiful air for the time being.

On the Tuesday night the midnight sun was really seen for the first time. We were steering amidst sounds, harbours, and peaks covered with eternal snows, full of almost unearthly beauty. The sun went downwards in its course, and we watched the changing colours in all their gorgeous phases. Then, nearing the horizon, the sun seemed to hover for a moment in mid-air, crept a little along the line, and commenced his upward course again.

Nothing could be more certain than the difference of colouring between the sun setting and the sun rising; distinct effects of light and tone; though the sun never even reached the horizon. Yet it was palpable and mysterious. Was it because in the

one case the light gradually but imperceptibly decreased, and in the other gradually increased again ?

We had left the Lofodens when we saw our first midnight sun effect, and were steering for Tromsö, a quaint northern town in the neighbourhood of the Lapps. It was to be almost our last halting-place before reaching the North Cape, where I hope to land the reader in the next chapter ; but, if possible, not in such weather as we then encountered. The most cruel, cutting wind ; the most blinding storm of snow and sleet ; the most lowering leaden sky that could possibly have greeted unhappy mortals in the broad light of midnight, any tenth of July, this nineteenth century of grace.

CHAPTER IX.

AMONGST THE LOFODENS—TROMSÖ—HAMMERFEST—
AT THE TOP OF THE NORTH CAPE.

NATURE, after putting forth all her strength in the Lofodens, seems to have become exhausted with the effort. No scenery between these islands and the North Cape compares with them in grandeur and sublimity. You leave with reluctance regions so magnificent, so desolate and remote; forming a little world apart, distinct and different from anything else encountered in these high latitudes. They become henceforth to the imagination less realities than scenes from fairyland, and memory recalls them as objects seen in a dream.

A dream made up of gigantic rocks; outlines sharp and piercing; surrounded by gorgeous colours; skies tropic-hued at midnight; flashing, jewelled waters; and eternal daylight. More tangible were the bays and sounds that opened up abruptly, ran a little way into the land, and disclosed small set-

tlements green and sheltered; mossy slopes that stood out in contrast with the barren outer walls of these matchless islands of the North.

We steered into one of these natural harbours. For once the people of the settlement were asleep in the broad midnight light. The steamer sounded her whistle. Every little house was closed; silence reigned deep as that upon the summit of the peaks. Not a creature stirred; not a dog barked; not a window opened in answer to the signal. It might have been the abode of the Seven Sleepers; an infected spot abandoned by every thing of life. Half a dozen times the whistle sounded, and still the good folk heeded not; nothing answered but the echoes from the hills. There was cargo to land; but, as the captain observed, it would keep. It was impossible to stay here for ever; so, out of patience at last, he went off again. The drowsy people might wait for their goods until the return journey; perhaps by that time they would have awakened.

It was soon after this that we left the Lofodens, steered across for the island of Tromsö, near the mainland, and reached it about eight o'clock on the Wednesday morning. The steamer had to wait here some hours, and every one landed in detachments. Herr X., with his white umbrella, accom-

panied us in the last boat, and together we inspected the town.

Tromsö is very picturesque. Green hills, sometimes snow-tipped, surround the harbour, and the town is built at the foot of the slopes. The streets are wide and straight, and there is an air of



LAPPS.

quiet prosperity about the place; a sort of semi-pretence to fashion, surprising after a long interval of fishing settlements, or towns that pretend to nothing. The ladies of Tromsö walked about in costumes that might have owed their existence to London or Paris—the ladies that crossed our path. For in all these towns, Thronthjem included, it was singular how few of the inhabitants declared them-

selves. Tromsö, with its 6000 people, might, for all we saw of them, have contained less than 600.

Outside the town we came upon a family of Lapps, sitting upon a green bank, quietly eating their breakfast—two men, a woman, and a little child. They were very small, with brown, withered faces and high cheek bones; the men without beard or whiskers, the absence of which is one of the distinguishing marks of the true Lapp. There was a good humour and gentleness about them, a merry sparkle in their blue eyes, which redeemed their faces from the unpleasantness of that peculiar type—the low-caste features, small up-turned nose, wide mouth, and undeveloped brain. They talked in some unknown jargon; hard metallic voices, shrill and squeaky, men and women alike; rattling out sharp words that sounded like a shower of stones falling upon a pavement. They had reindeer skins for sale, and red shoes or moccasins, turned up at the toes.

The Lapps have a great eye to a bargain; have learned already the art of asking more than they intend to take. They will impose if they can; and the cunning, not to be mistaken in their little sharp faces, is sufficient to put you upon your guard. They did their best this morning to do some business, but not caring to be

encumbered with a host of things during our walk, we were proof against their seducing offers.



THE LAPP HUT—AS WE SAW IT.

As soon as they found they could sell nothing, either at their price or our own, they grew sulky,

squatted around their kettle, and would not be persuaded to give us another look or word. In short, they behaved like children. Nevertheless, they were much impressed by Herr X.'s white



SLEDGING.

umbrella, as well as by a puggaree one of us wore upon a straw hat. This puggaree had been a source of frequent amusement to the natives in different places, though it can scarcely be an uncommon article of costume amongst the travellers visiting Norway. At one of the stations we were entertained by a native on shore asking the

chief officer whether the wearer was a woman, and if this was the ordinary dress of the English ladies. The officer, without replying, came up laughing at the question, and left the native in a confused and uncertain state of mind.

Tromsö is the capital of Finmark, that portion of Lapland belonging to Norway. It is the seat of the bishop, and boasts a cathedral: a small, unpretending building, built of wood. A young Norwegian who, with his wife, had accompanied us from Thronthjem, landed here, to be ordained the following day, and to devote himself to a missionary's life amongst the Lapps. This indeed was courage and self-sacrifice. The pleasures, luxuries, and bare comforts of life resigned for the sake of labouring amidst a race with whom one could have nothing in common, were it not for the common event which happens once to all. After our short English service on board on the Sunday, a small collection had been made for the good of his cause, and when the little box was handed to him, he replied in grateful tones: "You English are so loving!"

Leaving the Lapp family to lose their appetite and recover their good humour, we proceeded to reconnoitre the streets of Tromsö, enlivened by the mountain ash and wild cherry tree, planted on either

side, after the fashion of a boulevard. Passing by the cathedral, where next day the ordination would take place, following a long, white, dusty road, and turning into a small plantation of birch trees, we reached a pavilion, and obtained a splendid view of the surrounding neighbourhood. The bright,



CATHEDRAL CHURCH, TROMSÖ.

sparkling water lay sleeping in the broad sunshine, land-locked by the hills, clearly outlined against the sky. In the harbour were boats of many countries, to judge by the flags that fluttered in the breeze, and enlivened the scene not a little. Most picturesque of all, out in the middle of the water, our little steamer, the *Michael Krohn*, was unloading cargo on the one side and taking it in on the other. The

town lay below us, and we looked down upon blue and red roofs, white and yellow wooden walls. Far away again, on the one hand, stretched the blue waters of the sea; on the other, hills ran up into the land. In the valleys between dwelt colonies of Lapps, with their herds of reindeer, and one of these colonies we were to visit on our return from the North Cape.

Immediately surrounding us, the small plantation of birches rustled and glinted in the hot sunshine. Herr X., with his white umbrella, was to be envied, in spite of the green lining, which threw a cadaverous hue over his amiable features, and gave him the look of a resuscitated ghost—though one of ample proportions. In the wood, at our feet, was a small cottage, whose inmates were evidently flitting. At this moment they were away; the building was empty, and part of the furniture was scattered about the little garden. Who were they, these people, and what were they like? What had their life been in this little tenement? What would it be in the new house they were bound for? Were they happy and contented as they ought to be in this quiet spot, away from that world where life is more or less a “fitful fever”? Probably not.

Life might indeed have ended in fever, as we

wended our way back to the steamer, for the heat was an exaggerated repetition of Thronhjelm. Herr X., in spite of his umbrella, grew red as a lobster; whilst A. got cross, declared that it was too much of a good thing, and pathetically asked us to go and choose him a cool spot in the churchyard for his remains. But we survived it—as we generally survive even the impossible in this world. A few hours later, and how we longed for some of this now despised heat! It is always so. We are continually sighing for what is not. Discontented and ungrateful mortals, we make our own troubles, murmur at our self-imposed burdens, many of which exist only in imagination. Perhaps the liver has to answer for a great deal. Better that than the heart.

Leaving Tromsö to its heat and repose, we started for Hammerfest, the last town to be called at on our way to the North Cape, and the most northern town in the world. And now, to our infinite regret, the weather changed. It grew cold and unsettled; the sky clouded over; the water at times was rough enough to clear the decks, and to send most of the passengers below. The scenery became tame. Barren cliffs, neither grand nor interesting; especially now that a cold mist crept about them in the intervals when rain fell not and clouds hung low.

That night we had no grand sunset effects; all romance had disappeared for the time being. An amiable passenger assumed a red blanket by way of extra covering, and being ritualistically inclined—or, as he put it, “an advanced High Churchman”—a rosy flush of pleasure suffused his cheeks when it was suggested that he looked very like a cardinal, and wanted only the red hat to be perfect. So pleased was he at the idea that henceforth he seldom appeared without his red blanket, which gave an interesting variety to his appearance.

We reached Hammerfest the next morning, landed, and walked up a valley in search of reindeer. It was a cold, wet morning; but people go through the greatest hardships in life for their own pleasure, and no one thought of staying behind on account of the rain. To do so would have been madness; but to go forward, get drenched, catch rheumatic fever, or at least a terrific cold—this might be risked. So all went forward.

Hammerfest seemed to consist of one long, straggling street, built on the slope of the hill. It is noted for its cod-liver oil factories. It is also noted for its smells. It may be truly asserted that upon landing we were almost knocked backwards by

them to the earth. Anything more terrible cannot be imagined. Every time we passed a factory out came pocket-handkerchiefs, and the whole party took to its heels as if pursued by the incarnation of evil, dignity and grace recklessly abandoned. Never will those Hammerfest smells be forgotten; they are still too much even for remembrance.

But we survived this also, and reached the entrance to the valley. A stony, barren vale, absolutely void of verdure and vegetation, with a rough path, up which we began to toil in search of reindeer. Every one, it must be explained, was reindeer mad. Up and up we went: to our right a running stream, with a miniature sluice and a small mill, something like a Shetland mill, for grinding corn. The road was difficult and toilsome, and the valley had no beauty of its own to reward these pilgrims sacrificing at pleasure's shrine. It was wide and long—very long. The mountains fell away in gradual slopes of barren rock and stone, here and there covered with patches of lichen. Where the slopes were not rocky they were marshy; and a scream would now and then be heard, and an unhappy mortal might be seen gradually disappearing—like Mephistopheles through the trap-door. Unfortunately, no flames issued to warm our

benumbed members; and the interesting feminine screamer of course received timely and masculine rescue.

But to-day no reindeer—perverse animals!—appeared. This was the tragic element in the excursion. After walking for an hour and more, it was time to return. We did return, philosophically consoling ourselves with the idea that disappointment is the lot of man.

A. and Herr X., however, went on to the top of one of the slopes, and when they returned declared they had come upon a whole herd of deer, who had stared at them, and made friends with them in the most entertaining manner. Upon which the rest of the passengers felt themselves aggrieved; said that what was fair for one was fair for another, and that it was very unhandsome behaviour on the part of X. and A. not to have turned back with the others. People will be a little unreasonable when smarting under disappointment, and there is no help for it. It is human nature, or at least a certain phase of human nature. They whom it thus affects feel themselves martyrs or injured mortals, and naturally turn their resentment upon those who have given rise to the emotion. For my own part I was silent; but perhaps, like the historical bird, I thought the more; for I found myself wondering

whether X. and A. had really and indeed seen this wonderful herd of friendly deer. But no doubt I did them an injustice.

At the foot of the valley was a small, low hut, with one diminutive window to admit the daylight, or rather to make darkness visible within. It contained two tiny rooms, or compartments, black with peat smoke, and redolent of the same. The people, like the reindeer above, seemed quite friendly, and invited us to enter and reconnoitre. In the inner room a woman was rocking a baby done up like a mummy; one or two children played about the earthy floor, very dirty, and therefore very happy. Without, it was cold and dismal; within, it was cold and more dismal still. But the people seemed contented and comfortable; they knew, and consequently wanted, nothing better. The man was quite a handsome specimen of his race.

Next we charged past the oil factories in a body, and found our way to the post-office. There, happiness and home letters awaited us after more than a fortnight's silence—home letters that made up for weeping skies. Finally, we all laid siege to a fur shop, and every one bought according to his inclination or the mania that was upon him. Then back to the steamer, thankful that in spite of the smells of Hammerfest we were not dead yet. At

three o'clock in the afternoon we started for the North Cape ; with faint hope, alas ! of any midnight sun.

Between Hammerfest and the Cape, the outlines of the coast were grand, and occasionally majestic ; the weather was cloudy, but the rain had obligingly ceased. As we approached our journey's end the wind arose, and the cold grew bitter. The sea, too, became rough, and every one, except Herr X. and myself went below. We remained on deck, braving the elements, regardless of the lurches that every now and then unceremoniously sent us spinning from one side of the vessel to the other, chairs and all, as if we had been a couple of barrels. The waves washed against the sides, broke over the decks, and drenched us with spray ; but we were sublimely indifferent to these small discomforts. Nearing the North Cape, bold outlines of rocks, one headland after another of rude and savage grandeur, confronted the sea ; barren surfaces, as befitted rocks and headlands looking straight towards the North Pole, headlands that marked the commencement of the Arctic regions.

Yet, though down in the Christiania Fjord the sea freezes intensely in winter, up here at the North Cape it freezes never. Icebergs are unseen here, though it is a popular error to imagine the contrary ; the mean temperature of the land and water is very

even. This is due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. The extremes of cold must be sought inland and farther south.

At length, about eleven o'clock at night, the fine, bold headland of the North Cape loomed into view. Soon we entered its waters, that form



THE NORTH CAPE.

half a bay, and the vessel dropped her anchor. A cold, gloomy night; not a rift pierced the clouds that hung like a pall over the heavens, shutting out all the effects of the midnight sun and glory we had come so far to see. Before us was the North Cape, an almost perpendicular ascent of nearly 1000 feet. And there, far up the height, wending their slow and stately way, evidently

anxious to get out of our sight, was a long string of reindeer, passing over the frozen snow that lay to the left, disappearing one by one over the mountain top. This frozen snow showed plainly that if the sea at the North Cape does not freeze, as much cannot be said for the mountain heights. Nothing could look more picturesque, weird, and lonely, than this solitary herd of deer in these desolate regions of the far north, unmolested, many of them perhaps unseen, by man.

Though there was no chance of any midnight sun, yet it was clearly every one's duty to land and mount to the summit of the North Cape. Had we not all come so far for this very purpose? So the boats were lowered, and one load after another was put on shore, and soon those who were last could see the advance guard toiling upwards, and looking like flies upon a wall. Last of all struggled up two or three sailors, carrying between them fuel for lighting a fire at the top, a kettle of water, and a hamper containing champagne, brandy, and coffee, for those who might wish to refresh themselves after their arduous labours. It was hard lines enough to reach the top unencumbered, and these men, staggering under the weight of their burdens, might almost have drawn tears of sympathy from a stone.

After a severe tug we at length stood on the top of the North Cape—a large, flat area of tableland detached from the mainland by a few yards; the surface covered by a soft moss or lichen which yielded to the tread and made walking no easy matter. Anything more wild, barren, bleak, bare and desolate could not be conceived. As we set foot upon the summit the wind blew a very hurricane across our path, and hail, snow, and sleet came down with a force that almost cut our faces. It was impossible to keep warm even by walking quickly, and the wind having it all its own way, blew us about as it listed. Straight across the top, over nearly a mile of ground, we struggled and toiled to its most northern point. Gifted with miraculous vision we might now have looked upon the North Pole.

But in place of the grand midnight sun—most sublime sight, when seen from this lonely spot; the very ends of the world, as it were—in place of the gorgeous tints and tones that should have illumined sea and sky with eastern richness: behold, nothing but a dull, sombre, weird, mysterious midnight light, that was nor light nor darkness. Over all hung that dark pall of clouds; the wind searched us out and crept into our very bones; the hail, and the snow, and the sleet, ceased not their reign.

Down a steep perpendicular wall we gazed into the sullen water, with a feeling that made one creep and draw back. At the extreme edge we risked our fate for the weak-minded pleasure of picking up pieces of white stone to bring away as trophies—mementoes of our expedition to the North Cape, which at this moment was a fiasco. But if we record our successes in life, why not our failures also, unless it be that the latter would give us so much more work than the former? Every one's teeth chattered with cold. One lamented that he had not brought up his cardinal's blanket; another declared he felt paralysis gaining upon him. Every one's jaws, I say, chattered in quite a ridiculous way, and every one's face turned pale. As for the ladies, braving it all with dauntless courage, they were to be pitied; it was an unfit experience for them. Yet they loudly (you will always find the weaker the cause the louder the tone) declared that it was delightful and refreshing; whilst some so far parleyed with conscience as to say they preferred this frightful wind and raging storm to the glories of the midnight sun.

Struggling back to the other side of the Cape, we found the sailors and the stewards trying to light a fire and boil the kettle; but trying in vain. They had taken up half a dozen different positions

behind huge rocks, but wherever they went the wind went also, and no fire could live through it. So the ladies drank champagne out of wine-glasses, and some of the gentlemen had a little brandy to restore circulation and ward off paralytic attacks; but for the most part no one took anything. To all intents and purposes the servants had had their trouble for nothing. Nevertheless, next morning the stewards handed round a little bill to each of the passengers, ladies excepted, of 5s. 7½d. for "Refreshment at the North Cape." Some protested and paid: others, remembering that the men had really worked hard in the common cause, paid without protesting. When matters came to be investigated by those who objected, it turned out that sundry bottles had been broken in the transit, but how broken and how disposed of it was thought advisable not to consider too closely.

Frozen, half petrified, quite drenched, altogether uncomfortable and wholly miserable, every one now prepared to go down the mountain. It looked a formidable undertaking, and I, for one, wished myself safely on board the steamer—the only thing of life and animation visible on the great wide waste of waters. In twos and threes, small groups, or solitary units, the little band of martyrs toiled downwards.

To our right was a large patch of frozen snow—the very patch over which we had watched the string of reindeer in their majestic walk, as they followed each other like sheep. Upon this stood the chief officer of the *Michael Krohn*; but, knowing his ground, he had taken care to make two deep indentations. Less wise than he in such matters, I attacked the surface, and immediately began a sliding process without chance of stopping. In rolling over precipices one's fall may be broken by a friendly root or tree, but the snow puts forth nothing of this sort. There was, however, a living branch at hand, in the shape of the chief officer. In flying past him he caught and landed me on terra firma. But for his timely help I should have gone down more quickly than pleasantly, and probably have lost the chance of a second visit to the top of the North Cape—a chance, indeed, that I should pause seriously before accepting in any case. It will bear doing once, but I am doubtful about a repetition. Even the reindeer had found the summit too much for them, for when we were fairly on the level of the table-land they had disappeared as completely as if they had borrowed the magician's carpet and transported themselves to the North Pole. There the weather might have been more genial—it could not have been less so.

When the first boat-load shot off from the shore, Captain Bjornstad dressed the ship and fired a salute as a compliment to his passengers, and as they went on board the flags were dipped, to go up again when the second boat-load pushed off from the shore. This was repeated until all were on board, and about two in the morning the ship weighed anchor. A very few yards out at sea, and we stopped again; this time for the pleasure of a little deep-sea fishing. The lines were long and strong, and a large baited hook was dropped into the water. At a certain length the line, held between the finger and thumb, and jerked sharply upwards, certainly played havoc with the fish. Very soon large codfish strewed the decks. This lasted about an hour, when the sport was abandoned. Towards 3 a.m. we were fairly under way for Hammerfest, and reached it on Friday morning after breakfast. Torrents of rain were falling; the air was icy cold, and no one felt inclined to land.

Saturday morning early we reached Tromsö, and went ashore at 8.30, to visit a settlement of Lapps with their reindeer. The captain had telegraphed our arrival. As the deer have to be collected and brought down from the mountains, it is necessary to give notice of an intended visit.

It had rained all night in torrents, and it rained

still. But this had not quenched any one's thirst for the marvellous and the uncommon, and no one dreamed of staying behind. More than an hour's walk was before us. The road to the settlement led through a birch wood, up the Tromsdal, or Valley of Tromsö, and the path in many places was almost impassable. Sometimes over ankles in wet, and sometimes coming to a dead stand before some literal slough of despond, we gradually made way, and even enjoyed the excursion. By and by the rain ceased a little, and the air became at once less cold and disagreeable. In broad sunshine, blue skies and a dry path, the walk might have been almost magnificent. On either side the slopes of the valley grew the birch trees, looking quite luxuriant for Norway. The valley itself stretched far upwards, and seemed to terminate in a friendly meeting of the mountains—where, for those who cared and had time to explore, no doubt a grand pass would reward the enterprise.

But our journey came to an end long before that point was gained. Once more disappointment met us. After the heavy rains the Lapps thought no one would visit them, did not collect the reindeer, and were unprepared for us. In the centre of the valley we came upon two of their huts or tents, and with these and the people, and a view of the

interiors, we had to be content. Two or three families—generations, it might be, of the same parent stem—dwelt in the first tent; men, women, and children. At one end, over a great fire a pot was boiling, hanging from a tripod—a similar arrangement to those we have seen in gipsy camps in England. Lying on the floor, wrapped up like mummies, and almost smothered in bed-clothes, yet sleeping comfortably, were two or three babies, whilst as many dogs filled up spare corners. The Lapps are very fond of their dogs, and treat them with as much consideration as the Irish do another and less interesting animal. The place was dirty and untidy, but perhaps the dirt was not so much the fault of the inmates as of the peat smoke.

The Lapps were glad to see us, from interested motives. They were small, dried-up little people, like Dutch dolls, with twinkling, intelligent eyes, and, in spite of their ugliness, something in their faces that drew forth our sympathies. One thought immediately of the young missionary; and with these specimens before us, evidently capable of being awakened to better things, no longer wondered at his devotion and self-sacrifice—a life, it might almost be called, of self-immolation. With a wife to halve his troubles and double his joys; to help him onwards with the support it is woman's province to

minister to man—the support of quiet endurance and patience under difficulties, that in time surmount all obstacles—it was possible that their life might be contented and even happy.

But in our case the Lapps thought only of selling their little wares to the highest bidder. They brought forth their hidden treasures : gray slippers made of reindeer skin, turned up and pointed at the toes, and smartly bound with red ; spoons carved out of the reindeer horn and rudely engraved with the figure of the animal—cleverly done for people whose knowledge of carving could only be intuitive. These, and reindeer skins, they pressed upon us at large prices, and were evidently prepared to bargain for hours. They are greedy of gain, these Lapps, in their small way, and probably only want the opportunities of their more civilised brethren in the capitals of Europe to be as extortionate. This feeling, however, exists only amongst the Lapps who live near Tromsö, and are exposed to the temptations of frequent inroads from travellers on their way northwards.

One little girl came up and stared at us ; and, to see what the mother would say, I offered to purchase the child in place of slippers. At first the woman did not understand ; a puzzled look came into her small but intelligent blue eyes ; then a half-terrified ex-

pression, as she feared the child might be taken from her in spite of herself. At last, seeing the nature of the demand, her face beamed with smiles, and going over to her husband, in small convulsions of laughter she explained to him with intense fun and merriment the offer that had been made to her. Finally, she threw her arms round the little girl, and, looking up, shook her head, decidedly intimating that such a bargain was out of the question.

None of these Lapps were more than four feet high, ill-shapen in body as they were aboriginal in face. Certainly their dress showed them off to the least advantage. But it was picturesque in its ugliness, and in harmony with the people and their surroundings. Rude trousers or leggings of reindeer skin, tied round the legs with cord, and a long coat or blouse of the same, tied round the waist; warm, no doubt, but stiff, shapeless, and by no means handsome. The women were dressed much in the same way, and the smooth faces of the men made it sometimes puzzling to distinguish between them.

At length bargains were terminated and curiosity was satisfied. For my own part, sufficiently encumbered with a pair of shoes, I wondered what would have been the consequence if the woman had taken

me at my word and sold the child. Luckily the maternal instinct (and indeed the paternal, too) is one that may be almost reckoned upon all the world over. Herr X. invested in some skins, which one of the Lapps packed in a sack, threw over his shoulder, and accompanied us on our return to the steamer—a quaint and curious little figure.

Disappointment at not seeing the deer having been energetically expressed on our first arrival, two of the Lapps went off and disappeared amongst the hills. We now caught sight of them struggling and toiling down the mountain side with two of the animals. The more they pulled the ropes one way the more the animals tugged and struggled the other, until we thought their very horns would come out. Large and beautiful these horns were, and so were the eyes; but the deer, shedding their coat, did not look the romantic and lovely creatures of one's imagination. They were so wild, too, that the softness of the eye was turned to fierceness. They refused to stand still for a moment, and started at the least touch. On the whole, their more familiar acquaintance was voted a mistake. They had looked far more grand and majestic travelling over the snow at the top of the North Cape. There, in full freedom, unrestrained, and in the beauty of their heads, crowned with magnificent horns that stood out like

the branches of a tree, the grace of their movements and general appearance was not to be mistaken.

The men who had brought down the two reindeer—it had not taken them ten minutes to do the work—demanded fifteen krohnor in payment, a sum representing amongst the Lapps about ten times the amount it does with us ; and because only ten were given to them, went off into a diminutive but very decided rage, bubbled up and boiled over, and made as much chattering as an old market Jew under similar treatment. They would not be comforted, consoled, or pacified.

So we parted from the Lapps, and wended our way through the birchwood towards the steamer. Every now and then Herr X. gave a backward glance to the little Lapp who steadily followed with his lawful property—for it had been paid for in the hut. But the little old fellow showed no disposition to run off. Though they do not hesitate to charge double for their goods, in all other respects they are no doubt honest and sincere enough. They are a curious race, now somewhat dying out ; and they must be seen amongst their own hills and valleys, in their own tents, in the midst of their habits and modes of life, to be appreciated.

We reached the steamer before twelve o'clock ; another half-hour saw us once more on our journey,

dull skies, steady rain, bitter cold prevailing. As long as this lasted the pleasure of the voyage was over. Ladies put up their sketching materials, and, like the *Innocents Abroad*, took to their diaries with an energy that would have delighted Mark Twain. They looked inspired and important, compared notes, and so managed to kill time. The major portion of the community smoked, talked, took long sleeps to make up for lost opportunities, and began to think that the end of the voyage would be the beginning of happiness. It was coming ; slowly, perhaps, but surely.

CHAPTER X.

RETURNING FROM THE NORTH CAPE—SANDTORVHOLM—
THRONDENAES—MOLDE—AALESUND—BACK IN BERGEN.

IT is a melancholy but positive fact that the pleasure of a voyage to the North Cape is made or marred by that uncertain element, the weather. With blue skies and soft breezes nothing can be more delightful than this winding about rocks, islands, and mainland, day after day ; each hour bringing fresh scenes of interest before the traveller ; glimpses of the people of the country, with the quiet occupations that form the even tenour of their lives. Nothing can be more sublime than the gorgeous sunsets which envelope all things, until the very air seems to flash with a myriad rainbow-tinted hues, almost palpable to the touch.

And once within the Arctic Circle, the night that has no sunset, where no longer “the evening and the morning” make a day, but eternal noon seems to have risen upon the world ; this, too, if it has its

disadvantages, has also its special and rare charm. The days pass in a dream. Watching the changing tints as the sun nears the horizon which it does not reach ; watching again the subtle changes as the sun suddenly shoots upwards and silently announces that its course is run ; warning of the flight of time more mysteriously and surely than the midnight clang from some lofty tower, that with its iron tongue tells its own sad tale ;—the mind thus occupied never grows weary of dwelling upon effects that will not shape themselves into words, for they are subtle as the chameleon, delicate as the bloom upon the wing of a butterfly, and seem to partake as little of earth as the rainbow itself.

Day after day, the same glories meet the eye. For a time earth has been left behind ; you have entered some celestial paradise, more beautiful than dream or imagination ever pictured. Ethereal and unearthly is the effect ; and you dread lest a day or an hour should bring out of the east a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which shall expand and cover the heavens, until these glories give place to a sort of death in nature.

The change comes. As you look back upon the dream of sunshine and beauty that has been with you day by day, and compare it with the desolate skies and black clouds, the bitter winds and drench-

ing rains in which there is no dream, but a great deal of stern reality; despair falls upon the spirit, melancholy and weariness mark you for their own; you long for the end.

So it was with us. On reaching the summit of the flat table-land of the North Cape, had the wind only been in a more kindly quarter, instead of cutting hail and freezing cold we should have found a glorious sun, brilliant skies, stretches of Arctic sea glowing with midnight tints, a warm, balmy air. But that unfortunate mirage had announced the fate that awaited us, and sad was the disappointment.

Nor did this untoward state of things cease with the North Cape, and the return journey became in consequence inexpressibly tedious. The fact of our vessel being as much a cargo as a passenger ship grew unpleasantly apparent. Going upwards, when every step of the way had been fresh ground, giving rise to a succession of rapid impressions, this calling at the different stations was one of the pleasantest of the recurring incidents of the voyage. But now that cold and rain had succeeded warmth and sunshine, the frequent stoppages were wearisome to the last degree. And in returning, the ship seemed to have an unlimited amount of cargo to take on board. Every now and then almost half a day would be lost at some small uninteresting station,

whilst the hold was gradually being filled with dried stockfish, and the unhappy passengers were half poisoned with the smell that haunted them henceforth with too close a constancy ; a familiarity that bred a very decided aversion.

We left the North Cape on the Thursday night ; the word Night being a mere manner of speech, for it was distinguished from the day only by the revolution of the hours, not by the alternations of light and darkness. And yet much that we now saw was in reality new ground. As far as possible the steamer was timed to pass those places in the night which had been passed in the day going upwards. Had the weather only proved propitious all would have been well. But Friday passed, and Saturday, and still the skies wept. Sunday morning was gloomy, but the deluge had ceased. Before some of us were up the ship stopped at Sandtorvholm, and most of the passengers had landed to inspect the church of Throndenaes in the neighbourhood ; said to be one of the oldest and most curious churches in Norway. In about two hours' time they all returned, enraptured with their excursion.

Have you ever observed, reader, that if anything is going on in which you have been accidentally left out : such, for instance, as a long-planned picnic, or an excursion like the present : every one in returning,

with malice prepense, will outvie every one else in descriptions of the irreparable loss you have sustained; until at last you are ready to send yourself to Coventry for your untoward fate, and your friends to Halifax for their too evident effort to excite your regret. So was it in this instance. When the passengers had returned to deck, all tongues were loosened in a full chorus of praise of what they had seen and done: the charming road; the luxurious vegetation; the quaint church; the curious, fish-faced people. One of the party, indeed, with the true ring of small venom in his voice, remarked that it was the most glorious walk he had ever enjoyed in the whole course of his existence. We were led to suppose that we had missed the very gem of the voyage. Perhaps the most amusing part of all was, that shortly before the return of the absentees, A. had said with a laugh: "Take notice that they will come back full of raptures, full of supreme pity for those who were left behind; we shall have missed the most glorious thing out." So, when his words came to pass, he turned with a quiet "I told you so."

But the glowing description so worked upon the feelings of the two American ladies, that wailing and lamentation ensued on their part. Possessing, in their knowledge of human nature, the harmlessness of the dove but not the wisdom of the serpent, they

accepted as literal fact every word that was said, and were beside themselves with remorse. The Captain happened to be standing near them, could not resist their appeals, and offered to land them in their turn. The ship was not yet ready to start; they might see the church, and go on to the farther shore; the vessel would round yonder point, put in, and pick them up. This was satisfactory, and too kind an offer to be refused. The ladies hastily got ready, and being unprotected, A. and I offered to accompany them. We started, a small and select party, with two boatmen to put us ashore and act as guides. After a short row we landed and commenced our walk.

It certainly was a pleasant one, though it did not merit all the praises lately sung in its favour. A long undulating road between low green banks, adorned here and there with small clusters of birch-trees and stunted shrubs; evergreens that refreshed the eye after the monotony of the sea; but we saw nothing more "luxuriant" than this. There was a lightness in the air at once buoyant and refreshing. The sea plashed soothingly upon the beach. Out upon the blue waters the ship was still taking in cargo. We felt rather like being cast upon a desert island, and wondered what would become of us if the vessel went to one part of the island and we to

another, so that she finally missed us. It was an alarming thought, and the ladies turned pale, and clung to each other for consolation—as we all turn to those who have the first claim upon our affections when trouble lays his rude hand upon us. But we had faith in our amiable captain, and this restored tranquillity to their agitated minds.

Presently we came to a few scattered houses, and looked for the inhabitants, who, in this and other parts of this northern coast, are said to resemble fishes, from the fact that they have little else to live upon. We detected no resemblance, but as only two or three people crossed our path, experience was limited. Whether the quietness of Sunday reigned, or whether this deserted aspect of affairs was the normal condition of the village, we had no means of ascertaining. Our guides were amiable, but even less intelligent than their kind; and as they could not speak a word of English they might have been dumb as well as stupid. Once or twice, wishing to be enlightened upon some subject, we endeavoured to make ourselves intelligible by signs, but humiliating failure was the result. It was only when, later on, we rested at an inn, awaiting the arrival of the boat, that, asking them if they would like some beer, they responded by signs as full of intelligence and acquiescence as need have been.

Beyond the village we came upon a more barren spot overlooking the sea, in the midst of which stood the church of Throndenaes ; a curious monument of antiquity, and once the chapel belonging to a monastery. Of the latter all trace has disappeared. Near the church was the "priest's house," and out came two young boys, probably the priest's sons, with the keys of the church. The interior of the building was small ; quaint and curious rather than beautiful. Over the altar were some closed pictures, and the boys swung back the shutters on hinges that seemed ready to fall to pieces, revealing to one's startled gaze old and hideous daubs, all out of drawing and perspective, impossible faces and extraordinary contortions, which the youths proudly exhibited as priceless treasures. A pulpit black with age, and dark ancient pews, were amongst the few interesting relics of antiquity. A small opening led into what must once have been a sacristy, with an old stone that no doubt held holy water in the days of the monks. A railed partition, up a narrow, quaintly-carved staircase might have secluded nuns at their devotions. In this little place, only a few feet square, one could stand and go back centuries in imagination, to an age when men chanted matins and vespers, held their feasts and kept their fasts, and measured time not by events but by the

rolling hours ; little quips and cranks, small quibbles and jealousies amongst themselves alone varying the endless monotony of their existence. "The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

It is a quiet and desolate enough place now ; then it must have been the very embodiment of a living tomb—a death in life. And the monasteries of to-day, buried in those far-off solitudes, amidst the eternal silence of dark gloomy forests or lonely mountain heights, are no better. It is all a living death. Go, for instance, to the monastery of the Chartreuse. Watch a monk, as he creeps out of his cell, with stealthy tread disappear down the long cloisters until the far-off gloom hides him from view—on his way, it may be, to perform some penance. See these monks gliding out of their cells at midnight, a solemn, silent, mysterious, cowed procession, each carrying a lantern which obscures yet more the surrounding darkness, and faintly lights their footsteps—footsteps soundless in the long, cold, stone corridors, and unechoed in the distant arches. Watch them gliding into the dark chapel, each taking his seat and placing before him his lantern, all done as silently as if they were hooded phantoms. Listen to the melancholy chant of the midnight mass, which sounds more like a requiem for the dead than the prayers and praises that should animate the living.

See what a mistake it all seems; what a waste of life; what a gloomy, incomprehensible state of things; as I have said, what a death in life.¹

In a little gallery at the west end of the church at Throndenaes was a small organ, that looked as old as the building itself. We went up and inspected its jet-black keys, struggled through the loft and struggled out again, and finally left the church. The boys locked the door, and went off triumphantly with a half-krohn apiece; which, however, they examined critically and commercially before they tore away to their home. We continued our walk, and by and by came to the little inn close to the sea-shore, where we took refuge from the rain that now began to fall, and waited for the reappearance of the steamer. It was a quaint and interesting little place, and the man and woman of the inn seemed anxious that we should make ourselves comfortable and at home. They showed us over their kitchen, brought biscuits and Norwegian beer, made coffee for the ladies, talked and chattered just as if we could understand what they said; whilst the boatmen in an adjoining room emptied their bottles and looked the picture of contented happiness.

After waiting for about half an hour—just as we

¹ Since the above was written, the expulsion of the monasteries in France has taken place, including that of la Chartreuse.

began to think the Captain had forsaken us after all—the steamer rounded the point and steered for the land. We bade farewell to the good people, who accompanied us to the little slanting pier, up which the water was washing, and were quickly rowed to the vessel. Once on deck, the guilty consciences of our fellow-passengers were apparent. Every one's face was turned the other way, looking out for whales or sea-serpents, and no one asked us how we had fared. Had we not landed at Throndenaes its praises would have been sung in our ears to the end of the voyage; as it was, not a word was said—it sank into unmerited oblivion. For we had in truth enjoyed the excursion; had seen more and gone farther than those who had landed in the early morning; and lastly, had carried away a pleasant impression of the people at the inn and the time we had spent there.

Monday we were once more at the Lofodens, winding in and out amongst them the whole day; enjoying again those grand peaks and pinnacles, snow-capped, and, to-day, cloud-capped too. About seven in the evening, as we finally left them, the clouds rolled away like a scroll, and once more restored the glories of sun and sky and warm breezes which had now been four days absent. Once more, as we receded, the islands stood out in all their magnificence; immense cathedrals of stone

rising out of the great waters, built by no human hand. A halo surrounded them as the sun neared, then sank below the peaks; all the more vivid for the late gloomy and darkened skies. All nature was flushed, and the tints of an arctic night once more surprised and silenced us by their



SVOLVAER, IN THE LOFODENS.

beauty. The last vision of the Lofodens dwells in the memory as a dream of paradise.

Tuesday morning, to every one's joy, was brilliant. At 4 a.m. we reached Bødö, where we had landed on the journey northwards. At eleven we passed again the grand snowfield with its splendid glaciers, crossed the Arctic Circle, passed the Hestmand, and glided from the regions of the midnight sun. At five

o'clock we reached Sannesöen ; low hills bathed in sunshine, surrounding a small harbour full of boats ; a brown, picturesque church, conspicuous on the land, with a little tower surmounted by a species of dome-spire that looked as if it might be shut up like a telescope. From this place we had a grand view of the Seven Sisters ; those gigantic granite mountains, whose peaks rise up so sharply, some 3000 feet high, with long curves between.

During the night we had passed our old friend Torghatten, where days ago we had landed and climbed to its wonderful tunnel. Wednesday rose cold and cloudy, but cleared towards evening, as we passed through a channel just wide enough for the steamer. It was a wonderful and very lovely spot, and we glided through pale green transparent waters surrounded by lonely hills and mountains. Then the channel opened up into a magnificent natural harbour, and we passed into quite a fleet of vessels riding at anchor, painted in gay colours that reflected themselves in the calm waters. This was one of the prettiest sights of a voyage crowded with beautiful sights and impressions.

Evening wore on to night—night that was now very decided twilight. In the middle of that night Thronthjem was reached. Here a few of the

passengers landed, and we saw them no more. Before we were up in the morning, the ancient capital was far out of sight, and the second visit we had wished to pay the cathedral had to be deferred to some future occasion. Thursday morning, in



HAMMERFEST.

cold and cloudy weather, we made Christiansund ; but how different was the aspect and impression of the place from that first morning when we had seen it in all the glorious sunshine, all the picturesque solemnity of the water funeral ! Now we were only too glad to leave it and make way. At 9. 30, when the clouds had all cleared, and a brilliant sun-

set was once more charming us beyond words, we entered the beautiful Molde Fjord, with its luxuriant slopes, and steamed up to the town. The opposite hills, including the giant Romsdalshorn, were flushed, and in the rosy light looked like dream mountains. The situation of the town, with its fertile, tower-



TROMSØ.

ing slopes, is lonely, as is that of almost all the towns on the northward journey; but it is a loneliness probably that strikes only the traveller, not the inhabitants. Home is home, no matter where, no matter what; be it in the centre of a busy capital, or situated in some lonesome valley, or perched upon an isolated rock. On the journey upwards we had landed some people at a small far-away spot, of

which one might have thought them the sole inhabitants, so utterly gloomy and deserted was this little island in the midst of the sea. Yet, when they came in sight of it, rapture had seized them ; here evidently they found their happiness.

In Molde one could easily imagine happiness ; more difficult to picture the contrary. But the traveller has somewhat to rough it in the way of accommodation. Here we lost more of our passengers, including the two American sisters, who were courageously travelling about alone, in search, like every one else, of new scenes and impressions ; laying up a store of memories for a time, be it near or far off, which is sure to come to all who live long enough ; a day when travelling has lost its charm, and the exertion is not worth the reward. Many a man, like Sydney Smith, has lamented that his opportunities for travelling only came to him when he was too old to enjoy them. Therefore, O young man, seize thy tides at the flood ; opportunities seldom recur to any man, and that which is neglected passes into the womb of time, never to return.

Our opportunity for visiting Molde not having come, we steamed onwards. As we passed the hotel, the American ladies waved a farewell from their windows, and all faded from sight.

At one o'clock a.m. we reached Aalesund. The gloom, but not the darkness of night was spread over the little town; as yet we had not returned to the regions of positive obscurity. The houses, steeped in solemn quietude, were grouped on the slopes of the hills, made picturesque and



ON OUR WAY SOUTHWARD.

almost romantic — for Norway — by trees that grew about, and relieved the barrenness but too apparent in many of these places. The inner harbour ran up between the houses, and was separated from the outer by great locks. Through these came boats with cargo for the steamer, and a load of passengers bound for Bergen. Far away, beyond the town, the peaks of the grand mountains

seemed to repose in the sky—the range of the Langfjeld. Gradually the whole town was bathed in crimson light, the windows reflected a red glow, and



LAPPS.

the gloom brightened into the first glories of early morning.

Aalesund is a town of about 6000 inhabitants, comparatively new but prosperous, carrying on a thriving trade in codfish with Spain and Italy. The fish are caught in nets which are sunk far

down in the sea, their position marked by green glass buoys. When hauled up, the nets often break with the weight of the codfish, which abound in these waters. But though the town itself is of recent date, the surrounding country has many associations in connection with the ancient history of Norway. Not far from here was the castle inhabited by the famous Rollo, founder of the duchy of Normandy, and ancestor of William the Conqueror.

Here we bade a reluctant farewell to our pleasant travelling companion, Lieutenant X., who was landing at Aalesund with the intention of crossing the famous Justedal glacier, the largest and grandest in Europe. He left us in one of the shore boats, and toiling up the hill, was lost amidst the houses of the sleeping town.

We too departed, and all the next day were winding about the islands and between the rocks that cross our path as we approach Bergen. Again we passed the entrance to the Sogne Fjord, called at the various stations, revelled in the warmth and sunshine that gilded this our last day's journey, and about ten o'clock at night rounded the point that brought us in sight of Bergen. Returning to scenes almost familiar, we realised that our journey to the North Cape was a thing of the past. We

had seen the midnight sun—for days had been without sunset: and though the culminating point—the midnight sun at the North Cape itself—had been a failure, the journey, on the whole, had been a success. Looking backward was a source of pleasantest recollections. Better still, one felt strengthened and invigorated in mind and body by the pure air, the changing scenes, the variety of impressions in which for seventeen days we had revelled. The wet, gloomy days had been dull and tedious, it is true, but, like the small failings in a life that has gone from us, they were remembered no more.

Bergen, in the glow of evening, looked more picturesque than ever, its quaint houses rising one above another on the green slopes of the hills that towered in three distinct masses; whilst the harbour, crowded as usual with shipping, ran far up into the town, between modern warehouses and ancient buildings with gable ends, and an old fortress that was being whitewashed inside and out, for an approaching visit of the king.

We had telegraphed from the last station for quarters at Holdt's Hotel, and they reserved for us the one large room at their disposal. But many of the passengers were walking about for hours, finding rooms at length with difficulty, if they

found them at all. Bergen, between travellers and the near presence of royalty, was full to overflowing. One of our passengers, with his accompaniment of ladies, was amongst the unfortunate number; and to add to his distress, he lost part of his luggage in landing. Some of it got taken to one place, some to another. We had not been five minutes at the hotel, and were hailing some acquaintances we had chanced to meet, when down he came like an avalanche, and began searching amongst the new arrivals for his lost property. Amongst other rooms he entered ours—we had only gone into it ourselves in the darkness—and there, sure enough, was one of his bags upon a chair. He pounced upon it, glared at us suspiciously, looked under the beds, behind the door, and beneath the table, but found no more. Finally he went off, evidently persuaded in his own mind that we had laid violent hands upon his chattels. In our hearts we, comfortably quartered, could find only pity for him. He had been less fortunate; and there are few things more trying to the temper than having to perambulate the streets at the midnight hour, dead beat, in search of a place in which to lay one's weary head and aching limbs.

Midnight, too, was now midnight in reality. On our return to Bergen we had darkness for some

hours—a luxury few can realise until they have paid a visit to the North Cape, and crossed within the Arctic Circle during those long weeks, when, for these latitudes, there is “no night.”



LAERDALSOREN.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HARDANGER—EIDE—VOSSEVANGEN—STALHEIM—
THE VALLEY OF GUDVANGEN—GUDVANGEN.

WE wished to be back in England by a certain day. Had a boat left Bergen at a convenient season we might have contented ourselves with making a few of the many excursions that lie in the neighbourhood of the picturesque old town, and in due time have embarked from its shores. The Bergen steamer, however, for us, went by "the rules of contrary." It often happens so in life; and we have to preserve a calm exterior and an unruffled temper, by laying ourselves open, as it were, for small disappointments, philosophically balancing the bitters against the sweets of existence. So, when we found the Bergen boat would land us in England either a week sooner or a week later than was convenient, we looked afield for fresh plans.

And we found that by going to Christiania we should catch a steamer exactly suited to our

purpose. This decided us. We would work our way round to the capital. If this entailed traveling in part over old ground, we should be glad to renew the impressions of our first days in Norway—days when the North Cape had yet to be done, the midnight sun to be seen, and all the small incidents of that pleasant voyage lay still in the mysterious future.

Now all our North Cape experience was over; our faces were set in an opposite direction. But as far as the interior of Norway was concerned, our grandest scenes had yet to be encountered. There were several ways of getting back to Christiania, and as usual we heard various opinions upon the point. One advised the plain-sailing course of continuing our journey round the coast. Another strongly advised our going over the mountains by Thelemarken, but confessed we might be detained on the road, might have to walk many miles through a rough pass—at most, would certainly get nothing better than a shambling horse. This doubtful prospect was at once abandoned. Then we found that that very night a large steamer would go up the Hardanger Fjord, with a limited number of passengers; an excursion conducted, as Mrs. Malaprop would say, in the most *researched* manner. The ordinary cheap steamer would start just before the

larger one ; and as the fares in the latter were to be in accordance with the magnitude of the enterprise, there was be no fear of overcrowding. She was said to be magnificently fitted up, and was, moreover, the largest vessel that had ever navigated the fjord. This sounded interesting and adventurous ; and, as the schoolboys say in writing their home-letters, we availed ourselves of the favourable opportunity.

We had reached Bergen on the Friday night, and had no sooner landed, than at the door of the hotel we met two pedestrian acquaintances, who had crossed over with us from London. We had parted at Christiania ; they to take a walking tour into the interior, we to come round to Bergen on our way to the North Cape. Our lines had widely diverged, and now, singularly enough, had reunited. They amused us that night with many of their experiences in remoter parts ; small huts, in desolate regions, where they were entertained—supped, slept, and breakfasted, for the sum of sixpence ; other parts where creeping bedfellows compelled them to turn out and roll themselves up in a blanket upon the hard floor ; a number of adventures more or less interesting, that cannot be recorded here. At ten o'clock on Saturday morning they left Bergen again by the usual Hardanger steamer, their des-

mination Eide. At that early period of the day our plans were yet unformed; we had no idea that before many hours were over we should follow in their footsteps, our destination also Eide. Half an hour after they left we had settled our course. As it turned out, we could not have chosen more wisely.

We made the most of that day in Bergen, assured that we should see the picturesque old town no more. The heat was so intense that to look back upon the cold of the North Cape was like looking back upon an impression received in a far-off dream. The very stones of the streets cried aloud for water. The perambulating beer-carts drove a thriving trade, as thirsty householders appeared at their doorways and bartered for a double supply of the inoffensive beverage. For Norwegian beer, though refreshing, is mild.

In course of time we found ourselves at Herr T——'s, who, never having been himself to the North Cape, welcomed us as lions—in a small way. True, we had not discovered the North-East Passage; but there must be degrees of comparison in the world. Greatness, after all, is often only a matter of opportunity.

Herr T. asked us many questions about the North Cape, and the various incidents of the

voyage. These duly chronicled, we bade him farewell, and exchanged the grateful shade and coolness of his house for the outside heat and glare of the town. Next came the important event of dinner at Holdt's Hotel—a well-appointed table d'hôte, well attended. Soon after, it was time to start. At the last moment there was a great rush; there always is in last moments.

To make matters worse, the man in charge of our luggage put it on to the wrong steamer—a boat going to remote regions, so crammed with passengers in every part that it was quite impossible to move about on deck. Then ensued an intelligent pantomime; we could not speak Norwegian, the man spoke nothing else. After much trouble, just as the gangway was being withdrawn, the luggage was discovered. A dame of broad dimensions, in a gown and head-dress that would have driven an Indian squaw mad with delight, had seized upon it and converted it into a seat. No doubt she was tired of standing, tired of being knocked and buffeted about on the crowded deck, with the thermometer at 100° in the shade. Evidently, too, she thought possession nine points of the law, for only by main force did the porter rescue our property. Whereupon the lady, with the calmness of despair, sank a step lower in the world

and sat upon the deck. Only by throwing the portmanteau on shore, and jumping for it ourselves, did we finally land.

Our steamer was on the opposite side the harbour. This we now expected to lose. A large vessel, lively with numerous flags, which hung limp in the breezeless atmosphere. The owners, by way of inauguration trip, had organised this excursion up the Hardanger. We jumped into a "flöt," and made all haste towards her. But her third bell had rung, and long before we were half-way over, she was on the move. We were giving up hope and preparing to return, when one of the officers spied us out; the steps were hastily lowered; in a few moments we were on board. It had been a race with Time, and Time for once had lost.

The beauty of the vessel, fitted up with every regard to taste and comfort, had not been exaggerated. In the large horseshoe saloon, resplendent with fresh gilding and luxurious cushions, tables were spread for tea; and, as usual, at least a hundred different cheeses, like huge cakes of brown soap, gladdened the eyes and quickened the pulses of the Norwegians. If they sat down to a meal without cheese, breakfast not excepted, they would expect after that the Deluge. At the farther end

was a piano, which would be in demand later on in the evening. There were enough passengers on board to make the decks lively, but three times the number would not have overcrowded them.

Bergen looked hot and languid in the broad sunshine, as we steamed away, sorry to bid it farewell, glad to leave its baking streets for the cool breezes of the water—breezes begotten of our own rapid movement, for the air was still. Soon the changing scene demanded all our attention, and with the fickleness of human nature we forgot for the moment the pleasures and beauties of the past in those of the present.

Losing sight of Bergen we entered the Hardanger Fjord. Gradually the broad channel narrowed, until we found ourselves in waters just wide enough to admit the steamer. The banks were lined with luxuriant vegetation. Craggs and hill-sides covered with verdure took almost the form of castellated ruins. We had seen nothing so romantic and beautiful in all Norway. Everywhere leaves glinted and rustled, and murmured their secrets to the fairy folk that certainly dwelt here. The declining sun gilded everything with rich warmth and colouring. Passing through these narrow waters of enchantment, we wound in and around the mountains, amidst turnings so sharp it seemed every moment

that we should strand upon the very mountains themselves, until the fjord opened out again into more space.



IN THE HARDANGER.

Evidently our steamer was causing great excitement. At every small settlement out rushed its handful of inhabitants, gazing at us with wonder and delirious joy until we were out of sight. Occasion-

ally we stopped at a station, landed a passenger or two, and went on our way again.

The hills and valleys opened up in extreme beauty. Not the ruggedness of so many parts of Norway ; not the grand severity of the Sogne Fjord, some of whose mountains rise bare and frowning to their summits, but a soft, southern luxuriance—the fertility of a warmer clime and lower latitudes. Villages, at distant intervals, nestled in the slopes ; waterfalls dashed downwards into the fjord with their everlasting monotone. But the more important falls of the Hardanger can only be seen by landing and walking some distance.

Nothing could be more strange and unfamiliar, more interesting and romantic, than going up into the land, hour after hour, in this large steamer, whose place, as it seemed, should have been the broad waters of mid-ocean. But this only made it the more unreal and delightful, as if we were going through a living experience of one of Hans Andersen's fairy tales. Anything less like ordinary life could not be imagined. We were in a dream ; but a waking dream, in full possession of our senses, able to revel in all the happiness of the fleeting present.

Not one of the least charms of this excursion was the fact that we could never see very far

ahead of us. The windings of the fjord were so numerous and abrupt, we seemed for ever turning a corner, leaving one grand panorama only to enter upon another. At some of the stations they treated us to a salute, in honour of our size ; the vessel returned the compliment, and the echo of the guns went rolling up into the hills and lost itself in the far, very far distance.

Gradually, to our sorrow, twilight gave place to darkness. Nothing was left us of the beauties of the land but the outlines of the mountains, with here and there a white cataract finding its way to the dark waters below—outlines gigantic and weird in the gloom of night ; full of suggestions of mystery ; full of strength and power ; full of a solemnity that seemed out of tune with the gaiety on board. For the passengers, on pleasure bent, were naturally of a lively and frolicsome turn of mind. Yet it was all quiet enough ; liveliness without noise, laughter without riot, as befitted respectable citizens of Bergen ; as characterised, moreover, an assemblage of Norwegians.

With darkness music took up the tale ; and a lady played some of the most entrancing music it had ever been my lot to hear. I do not know who she was ; I know not whether she was aware of her power ; but every line that lady played

was full of genius. After some grand passages of Wagner and Beethoven, and the sweeter strains of Mendelssohn, she suddenly struck into an extempore performance, so wonderful that at least one of her audience was thrown into a dream that came to an end all too soon. In that performance, all our experience since leaving Bergen seemed to be put into music; in those notes, now calm and gliding, now wild and passionate, one saw again all the beauties of the fjord. She ceased as suddenly as she began, plunging many into despair; for, with the perversity of genius, nothing would induce her to strike another note.

Going up on deck, we were just in time to witness an exhibition of fireworks. For some time golden showers, rockets, and blue lights enlivened the darkness, lighted up the mountains, and brought out the form of the vessel with startling effect, intensifying the darkness as each display died out. The passengers grew enthusiastic, clapped and cheered, and were altogether charmed with their surprise—for the fireworks had been kept a close secret.

About one o'clock, when there was a faint suspicion of dawn in the east, we entered the narrow waters leading up to Eide, and gradually and quietly came up to the landing-stage. Here the first person

to greet us was one of our Bergen friends, who, by some prophetic instinct, had taken up the idea that we should arrive by this vessel. It was a happy thought, for before any one could land he went off and secured us a bedroom. Others, less fortunate, had to go without, or put up with chairs, whilst one youth walked about throughout the night. We met him the next morning looking wild and haggard, pale as a washed-out ghost.

So that night at Eide we bade the steamer farewell, and she went on her way up the fjord. Our route towards Christiania would take us through Vossevangen, Gudvangen, and the Sogne Fjord. And to every one who finds himself in this neighbourhood I would say, Go and do likewise. There will be neither regret nor disappointment, except the inevitable regret one feels when all good things come to an end.

On awaking next morning, our previous day's experience seemed more than ever a dream of beauty and enchantment rather than a reality. And to such a dream we awoke—for Eide in its situation and surroundings is little less.

The inn stood upon the border of the waters, only the narrow road between. On the opposite shore were stretches of green fields bounded by luxuriant hills. Great mountains rose to the

left, leading towards Vossevangen, and into the unknown mysteries of that road we were soon to plunge. There was something about Eide strangely full of calmness and repose, a subtle, soothing influence especially grateful to the spirit. The place was romantic, out of the common order, slender in houses and population ; so remote from the world—even the world of Norway—that one longed to spend a month revelling in its retirement. Here you might pass your days in quiet contemplation ; or, if it pleased you better, in whipping the stream hard by, stocked with trout that cry aloud to be taken.

We watched them from the rustic bridge lying idly amongst the stones, every now and then a lively fellow rising to the surface as an unwary fly darted down to its fate. A vivid recollection of that Sunday morning, gorgeous with heat and sunshine, remains ; its calm, isolated position ; its utter silence. And we, like children, lay idly upon the banks, and threw stones into the waters for the pleasure of disturbing the bright surface, which reflected so vividly mountains, trees, and sky—the bluest sky imaginable, that cast quite a celestial tinge upon the distant hills.

At twelve o'clock our pedestrians started off on their way to Vossevangen, undeterred by heat or any other consideration. At two we were to follow

them, in carriages. Sunday in Norway is over by two o'clock, as far as religious purposes are concerned. If you travel from early morn till dewy eve it will neither offend nor surprise the prejudices of the people; but in the afternoon every one



VOSSEVANGEN.

travels who has need to do so. Again, it has already been said, it frequently happens that you must travel on the Sunday whether you will or not, unless you are prepared to run the risk of throwing out of joint the whole plan of your journey.

We were not so prepared; and punctually at two

o'clock our carriages were ready. We bade a reluctant farewell to Eide, devoutly hoping it might be our good fortune one day to see it again. For a considerable distance the road skirted the borders of a lake, the mountains on one side, the calm water reflecting all surrounding objects on the other. Our fresh little horses bowed along in earnest style, as if they too found happiness in this glorious day, these beauties of Nature, this hot, yet exhilarating air—a combination that went through one's very being; making this drive through the everlasting hills almost as much an act of worship as that of the congregation in the little church in the distance.

Presently we came up to the church and the village—a few houses nestled on the slope of the hill, where the road turns away from the lake. The door was closed, all service over for another week. Small groups and couples were scattered along the road in picturesque Norwegian costumes; the “Sunday's best,” that saw daylight only on high days, and on ordinary days was wrapped up in lavender, stowed away in some of those quaint, gaudy pieces of furniture, all paint and flowers of unimaginable colours, that seem to be heirlooms in these little households, and are handed down with reverence from one generation to another.

These groups and costumes on the road enlivened the journey ; harmonised with the surrounding scenes ; gave to the hills something of life and animation. Many were the couples spending their Sunday afternoon in long strolls—many, that is, for Norway—perhaps there were not twenty in all. No doubt some of them, with arms intertwined, were making love to each other, vowing eternal fidelity, and forming plans for the future. Humble plans, without ambition, or care, or desire to rise beyond that state of life to which they were called—but to them as full of meaning and import as the future of one into whose calculations it enters to destroy empires or build up thrones.

Presently we passed this level bit of road and commenced a steep winding ascent, which the horses had to take leisurely and with frequent pauses. We felt almost like flies going up a wall, as gradually and with labour we crept up this semi-perpendicular zigzag. To our left rose a gigantic wall of mountain rock, frowning and almost black. At length we reached the summit, and commanded the magnificent view and the pass itself. A little ammunition would have kept a whole regiment of soldiers at bay. Far below lay the lake, its calm blue waters stretching towards Eide, that we yet regretted. The little church

and village reposed in the shelter of the mountain, safe from the storms of heaven, the tempests of earth.

We lingered long, resting the willing horses, satisfying our souls with beauty, and then turned our faces onwards. A gradual descent took us once more into the valley, the road now lying amidst a vast pine forest. The sun cast lights and shadows through the trees, grateful to the eye, tired with heat and glare; and grateful was the shade occasionally thrown upon the road itself.

Nearing Vossevangen the plain opened out into one of the most extensive views to be seen in Norway. Grand mountains and valleys lay in various directions; passes leading up into unknown regions—as far as we were concerned. At our feet the rich vale; and, as yet in the distance, reposed the village, lake and church of Vossevangen. With a long, sweeping road, we descended from our bird's-eye view; the air growing hotter, the mountains seeming to rise and expand as we neared the dead level of the plain.

Our two friends had made good way. We overtook them only within about five minutes of our destination. Passing through the village, which seemed quite a remnant of the world in comparison with Eide, we found it lively with the inhabitants,

who had all turned out of doors this fine evening, and stood chatting in groups, or idly lounging against the walls. Our arrival was a little diversion for them, and created an excitement in a small way. The people stared, and a buzz arose, something like the noise of bees swarming. We left it all behind, and soon found ourselves at Fleischer's Hotel.

It is a picturesque spot, by the side of a large lake in which there is said to be good trout-fishing. The plain is extensive, rich, and fertile, and the mountains rise in all directions, near and distant. The inn itself is on the slope of a hill clad with rich trailing verdure; whilst a cultivated garden containing flowers and fruit altogether makes this spot very un-Norwegian in aspect.

Later we sallied forth to reconnoitre the neighbourhood. It was only a repetition of what we had seen. First we inspected the church, which, large for Norway and very ancient, contained little that was interesting or worthy of note—unless it was a band of irreverent girls rushing about the aisle and gallery, and playing at hide-and-seek. Opposite the church we noticed a long range of buildings; stables, in which the congregation—those who come from a distance, as many of them do—put up their horses during service time on Sunday

mornings. The quiet dead rested in the churchyard, many of the graves, no doubt, old as the building itself; but the spot seemed held in small respect by the people.

Indeed, the good folk of Vossevangen appeared rather of an exceptional type altogether—bolder and more daring, staring more rudely, and openly making their remarks—possessing the independence of the Scandinavians without the good breeding that characterises so many of them. But we took into consideration that it was Sunday—they were in their best clothes, and out of their natural element. It was a day of idleness with them, and “Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.” Had it been Monday, we might have found them ordinary Norwegian folk—busy and quietly civil.

Climbing upwards to the highroad, we anchored on a pile of logs by the wayside, on the slope of the hill, watched the sun descend and twilight creep over all. The mountains and the vales were about us. The setting sun gilded the trees and flushed the sky, which passed through all its phases of colouring, until it faded to the colder tones of nightfall. A number of carriages dashed past, one after another; finally followed by a lumbering barouche holding four black-coated, dust-begrimed travellers, who looked hot and ill-

tempered, and gazed suspiciously at us, as if they wondered whether we had taken up all the room and devoured all the food Vossevangen was capable of supplying. But Herr Fleischer was a man of resources, had a keen eye to his own interests, and was equal to an emergency. We returned presently to find our quiet quarters in possession of a noisy band, disposing of beer with as much earnestness as if they had just terminated a six weeks' fast.

We left Vossevangen the next morning, somehow with far less regret than we had quitted Eide. The landlord had given us horses for the whole distance, so that we should be spared the trouble of changing. Our friends were an hour ahead of us. It would take, at least, seven or eight hours to accomplish our journey of twenty-eight English miles.

Between Vossevangen and Gudvangen the stations are some of the worst in Norway, where it is impossible to pass the night except from necessity. The road is, for the most part, diversified and picturesque; but at the last station before reaching Gudvangen, Stalheim, a scene of grandeur and sublimity bursts upon the traveller, perhaps not to be surpassed in the whole country.

We reached Stalheim about four in the afternoon,

and waited here some time. One of the horses had cast a shoe; and the post-boys, having to change one horse, for some reason of their own thought



STATION AT STALHEIM.

they would change the other also. This was, perhaps, the roughest, rudest, and most unpleasant station we had yet seen. Three or four men and women—the former looking like ruffians one would scarcely like to meet on a dark night, the latter

only a degree better—were seated at a long deal table, taking their evening meal. An earthenware basin stood in the middle of the table, holding a hot, brown liquid that looked far from tempting. In this they dipped, sometimes one after the other, sometimes all together, a thick slice of sour black bread, held in their fingers ; and occasionally fingers and all were immersed in the steaming liquid. Their faces became gradually smeared with the same ; and they ate more like animals than human beings. If the reader is repelled by the description, what were we by the reality ? In a very short time we backed out of the room, and took up our standing on the doorstep in spite of the broiling sun. Nearly an hour was wasted here, and then we continued our journey.

Passing upwards to the right, we found ourselves on the brow of a high, steep hill, gazing into the Valley of Gudvangen. On either side, the mountains towered in gigantic masses, rising precipitously and in many forms. One pile behind and beyond another stretched far away. The valley itself was narrow, and in places seemed only to give room for the road and the stream that ran beside it. The descent from our present position, steep and abrupt, was managed by a series of zigzag paths cut out of the side of the precipice, and called the Stal-

heimsleft. Involuntarily one's first instinct was to get out of the carriage for safety. This we had to do very soon to ease the horses, who every now and then had to slip down a steep bit on all fours. On either side the Stalheimsleft a magnificent and most picturesque waterfall tumbled, about 1000 feet of white foam, into the stream below. The close proximity of these falls, at right angles with each other, and fed from distinct sources, added much to the beauty of the scene.

We gradually descended this wonderful Jacob's ladder to the level of the valley. For more than an hour the road was a series of grand and overwhelming impressions. At length the valley expanded into something like a small plain, a few farms were passed, and we came upon a cluster of houses which proved to be Gudvangen, and our journey's end.

Gudvangen is situated at the head of the Naerofjord, the grandest and most picturesque branch of the Sogne. The village is shut in by towering mountains. Immediately in front of the inn, some 4000 to 5000 feet high, were three distinct falls, but of which the body of water was at present small. It was now Monday evening, and we found that the steamer would not call until Wednesday. But we were not sorry for a day's rest in a spot so full of

beauty, and with edifying resignation abandoned ourselves to the inevitable.

Our friends, the walkers (by nature, not by name), were only about an hour after us, having posted from Stalheim. Thus it would seem that in the matter of time, the tortoise, in Norway, might



GUDVANGEN.

almost beat the hare. In other words, what with the walking pace of the horse, which now and then degenerates to crawling, seldom reaches more than four miles an hour, and sometimes does not get beyond two; what with the frequent stoppages of half an hour or an hour, occasionally expanding to

three or four hours at a station ; it is a matter of doubt whether pedestrians, after all, have not the best of it. At least they have full freedom and liberty ; they can halt when and where they please, regulate their own pace, and at the journey's end find themselves—plus so much money not expended in posting ; plus invigorated health, and therefore happiness ; minus—I know not what, unless shoe-leather fails them. But this applies to strong men and good walkers. There are others to whom a walking expedition would be only a slow way of committing suicide ; and these others not so few in number as the world may imagine.

That Tuesday was a very quiet, very pleasant day at Gudvangen. We spent the morning in voluptuous idleness, lying upon the grass under the fruit-trees, looking up at the mountains, watching the waterfalls, tracing forms in the fleecy clouds that here and there floated across the sky, luxuriating in the heat and the sunshine above—so delicious to those who were in the shade and cool of the valley below.

In the afternoon two of us started in a *stolkjaer* up the valley, simply to renew and revel in our impressions of the previous day. Almost more grand than ever seemed the drive. The quiet valley ; the farms inhabited by people whose wants

were few, ambitions none; the running, rippling stream that never ceased its course until it fell into the deep waters of the Naerofjord; and lastly the towering mountains, rising sometimes to a height of 6000 feet; barren slopes, huge rocks of perpendicular, wall-like fronts, or round and conical shaped like a sugar-loaf. We went to the very foot of the cleft, looked once more upon the splendid falls, felt that we had done our duty (duty and pleasure for once went hand in hand), and then turned backwards again.

We were in primitive but comfortable quarters at Schultz's hotel. The people were obliging and civil; so anxious to do all in their power to please, that far less than we received would have satisfied us. The landlord was away for the time being. His representative had been in America; learned English there; was suddenly taken with a desire for his mountain home (perhaps, too, he had not been particularly successful, but we did not like to be inquisitive), and so returned. An amusing and original character, a little too free and easy for one's English ideas; but we made allowance for his training. He was really an honest, straightforward man, and had gained nothing of the sharpness which the Americans, whether they deserve it or not, have the credit of possessing.

So when the Wednesday morning came, and with it the steamer that was to bear us away, we left Gudvangen with reluctance—its pleasant quarters, its magnificent surroundings, its studies of human nature. But time, “like an ever-rolling stream,” runs on; and we had an allotted task to perform in a given period. Accompanied by a small crowd of friends we had made during our short stay—village natives who insisted upon seeing the last of us (a compliment capable of two interpretations), we all went on board the steamer. Every fresh stage of our journey brought us nearer the end of all things—from a Norwegian point of view.

Down the Naerofjord: between its glorious mountains, sombre and frowning, yet often pine-clad to their very summit, casting their shadows into the depths of the impenetrable waters. Then, leaving all this, we launched forth into the broad open waters of the Sognefjord.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE SOGNEFJORD—LAERDAL—A LANDSLIP—HUSUM—A LONG
DAY'S JOURNEY—A BREAK-DOWN—FAGERNAES—SVEEN—
TOMLEVOLDEN—ODNAES—ON THE RANDSFJORD—BY ROAD
TO HONEFOS—NORDENHOOS—SUNDOOLDEN—THE "KING'S
VIEW"—SANDVIGEN—CHRISTIANIA—VALE.

NOT until long familiar scenes and circumstances have passed away for ever, can we know how happy we were in them, and what a blank has arisen in our lives. Rarely, until the loved has become the lost, as far as earth is concerned, do we appreciate at its true value the quiet, unobtrusive beauty of a life that is never more to make our sunshine. The light of other days has faded, and the same light can never again brighten those that are to come.

So, not until our short stay at Gudvangen was over, did we realise what a pleasant interregnum it had been to our life in Norway—a brief calm in the storm of constant motion through which for many weeks we had been passing. Everything favoured us. That uncertain element, the weather,

had been propitious. The situation of Gudvangen was retired as it was glorious ; the small handful of houses enlivened, but took not from the repose of nature. By the time our stay came to an end we were looked upon as old inhabitants of the place,



GUDVANGEN.

and felt on friendly terms with every one. This happy state of feeling was apparently shared by the natives themselves ; from the postmaster, with his calm refined face, that appeared to have a past history in it of some shock, trouble, or suffering, down to his two pale-faced, intelligent boys, who

seemed above the rest of the village lads, and somewhat out of place amongst them.

They, amongst others, accompanied us to the steamer, one of them chattering in English, which he had managed to pick up by some process of his own unknown to the rest of the little world. "Will you come with us to England?" I said, pleased with his endeavours to conquer the difficulties of an unknown tongue; anticipating that the fear of a stranger, the vague mystery enshrouding a far-off land, the love of home, would bring forth a decided NO. But I reckoned without my host—or rather, in this instance, without my guest. The little fellow of thirteen summers was quite ready to depart. With the most serious air he started off to obtain his father's consent and pack his trunk. There and then, with the happy confidence of youth, he would have placed his hand in mine, and gone with me to the ends of the earth. After that it was not the easiest task in the world to persuade him that his best place was by his father's side.

So we departed; steaming down the Naerofjord into the broader waters of the Sogne, calling at many stations on our way to Laerdal. One spot in particular drew forth many an adjective of praise from the passengers, where sloping hills, green,

placid, and fertile, swept round in an immense semi-circle, their shadows reflected in the calm waters. Here sheep grazed and goats skipped about in happy security. It was the only bit of smiling



ON THE SOGNEFJORD.

landscape we had seen on the broad arm of the Sognefjord, where, for the most part, everything is of the severe and frowning type. Barren mountains, raising their gigantic and rocky heads in magnificent disdain of all that is soft and beautiful

in nature ; deep fissures and crevices, where repose eternal snows ; heights given up to the blue ice of the glaciers, whose existence is not marked by decades and generations, but sets centuries at defiance.

Towards evening we passed between the high mountains that contract and tower in the neighbourhood of Laerdal, rounded a point, and in the distance sighted the little town (that was no better than a village) reposing in the plain.

It was a return to old familiar quarters. But there was still the same want of cordiality in the landlord to his guests ; and still the waiting-woman was repelling as ever ; as silent and mysterious in her movements, looking at you with a fixed unamiable stare when you made a request, that, in fear of her, became a petition, and almost an apology. And still she would listen and depart, making no sign, but presently doing your bidding.

And now, for the first time in Norway, we were prisoners from stress of weather. Thursday morning announced itself with a downpour of rain that rendered travelling impossible where it was not imperative. We had a few days to spare, and determined to wait in hope of better times. Our pedestrians did likewise. It was as unpleasant to walk as to carriage in the rain.

Of all places Laerdal is perhaps the worst to be detained in. Sheltered from the winds, it soon grows hot, relaxing and dismal. The mountains, so close to the inn, overpower you, until at last you feel oppressed as by a nightmare. The everlasting murmur of the cataracts becomes infinitely wearisome, and drives one to the verge of madness. The body of water was two or three times as great as at our first visit, and the noise was loud in proportion. We went to bed with our windows open, and could not sleep for the roar; we closed them, and were suffocated. It was all very picturesque, but one may pay too great a price even for the beautiful.

So we hoped that Friday would mend matters; but Friday, more obstinately wet, only marred them further. Some of the travellers, however, had had enough of it, and took up the thread of their journey soon after breakfast, departing in carriages. They had their trouble for their pains, and a drenching through and through into the bargain. In about three hours' time they returned with the alarming intelligence that the heavy rains had caused a landslip. A portion of the road overhanging a precipice had given way; it was impossible to pass over. Men were already hard at work, and it was hoped the road would be open, at least to

pedestrians, on the morrow. Next week the king would come that way, in his royal progress through the country, and not an hour was to be lost.

This intelligence was not exhilarating to those whose time was limited. But on Saturday morning came the good news that the chasm was bridged over by planks. The rain had ceased, and with it our endurance of Laerdal. We hired carriages to take us right through to Christiania, and bade the comfortable inn and its eccentric folk a last, not very reluctant farewell. Our friends had shouldered their knapsacks, and were an hour or two ahead of us.

The road now lay through familiar scenes ; and we renewed with pleasure the impressions of our first carriage journey in Norway. Passing up the valley, which narrowed as we ascended, we presently came to the site of the disaster. Just before doing so we met two ladies travelling to Laerdal, and boiling over with rage at the ungenerous conduct of the navvies. The chasm was so slightly bridged by the planks, that vehicles had to be dismounted and carried across. The overseer was away, and the men refused to do anything under a bribe ; assisting the ladies at the end of two hours only when their extortionate demands had been satisfied.

After tendering every consolation that sympathy could afford, we proceeded to the scene of action. It was a formidable landslip ; a few loose tottering planks, requiring a steady head, and something more than Dutch courage, alone enabled one to pass over the yawning chasm. The sides were steep, rocky, and precipitous, and the noisy torrent of the Laera ran over its stony bed. For some time we endeavoured to impress upon the men, an evil-looking set, that we should think it amiable on their part to assist us. They stared insolently, but paid no further attention to the requests. Suddenly, without warning, after keeping us waiting more than an hour, they turned to, dismounted the carriages, and carried them over in a twinkling. Horses could not pass. At this crisis the overseer appeared, and the mystery was solved. Like Miss Pecksniff, they had seen him coming round the corner.

But we were over, and we were thankful. At about six o'clock that Saturday evening we reached Husum, where we had arranged with our friends to put up for the night. And not for that night only, as it turned out, but for all Sunday also, when the down-pour of rain was greater and more determined than ever. It was a pleasant, quiet Sunday, and we had the place to ourselves. In the afternoon, when the rain ceased, the youths and maidens of the surround-

ing buildings dressed up in their costumes, and went their various ways. One little fellow shouldered his rod, and in about an hour's time returned with a dozen fine trout, some of which found their road to our supper-table.

Monday rose in splendour and tremendous heat ; a reward for patient waiting. A long day's journey lay before us ; a longer one was in store for the morrow. These enforced stoppages had stretched our time to its utmost limits. At Haeg we overtook our two walking friends, and finally parted from them. We had now to push on, and the most indefatigable pedestrian could not keep up with the rate at which we must travel. Not that the speed was startling, but the hours were long.

Again we passed through familiar scenes : again we were struck with the subdued look of the pale, apparently hen-pecked landlord at Skogstad, though on this occasion we neither saw nor heard the shrew. Perhaps she had been tamed ; perhaps she had departed this life. Yet there were no signs of any suddenly-acquired happiness in the man's expression ; no insane joy irradiated his countenance. Shrews, as a rule, live to be a hundred. Like cats, they have many lives ; but, unfortunately, they cannot be so easily disposed of. What would kill ordinary women is a mere jest to them. It is always our "dear

gazelles" that go first. And this brings us face to face with another of Life's many mysteries—why man, constantly putting out a blind hand for the substance, so often grasps only the shadow.

We left the subdued martyr, so shadowy himself, and pushed on to Tune, where we found the illustrious Member of Parliament at home, full of care for his guests; as little like an M.P. as he could be—so modest, so ready to act, so little given to talking. It was at this second visit that he begged us to return later on in the year, with a party of friends, to shoot bears, declaring that he would guarantee excellent sport, and make us as comfortable as his out-of-the-way inn permitted. And he would have been as good as his word. Nevertheless, we spared the bears. It was a formidable undertaking, and the cold of a Norwegian winter, setting other considerations aside, was not to be lightly encountered.

We started at six the next morning upon our longest day's journey. It did not come to an end for twenty-one hours, although at Reien it nearly came to an end altogether. Here they gave us horses in a condition only to be speedily put out of life and misery. We afterwards learned that the station was noted for its inhuman proceedings. In this instance our postboy was a woman, and she

sat herself, as they generally do, upon the luggage behind. A.'s carriage had the double load. My horse, the better of the two, soon outdistanced the other. The road wound round at the foot of the mountains, beside the running stream, which now and again broke into grand waterfalls. Nearing Fagernaes, I waited for A. to put in an appearance, and after what seemed an interminable time, he rounded the corner, walking—carriage, horse, luggage and woman were not. The animal had broken down, and could scarcely crawl at the rate of a yard a minute.

There was nothing left for it but to push on to the inn, and despatch a horse for the absent vehicle. But we had not been many minutes at Fagernaes before the woman came tearing in, like another Jehu, carriage and luggage in possession. What did it mean? Simply that the woman, meeting an empty *stolkjaer* on the road, in spite of all protestations on the part of the postboy almost ending in a pitched battle, had seized upon his good horse and left him the bad one. We were lucky in having a woman for our charioteer; boy or man would never have had sense thus to get out of a difficulty. But we wondered how the youth felt and fared, who, no doubt, was still patiently waiting on the highroad the resuscitation of his steed.

All differences adjusted, we pushed on to Frydenlund, branched into a new road, and from this point into new scenery. That to the right led to Sörum and the Spirillen, the road we had followed in coming from Christiania. We now turned up a gradual and lengthened ascent, ending in a view at once magnificent and extended ; the immense valley and plain of Valders, intersected by its villages and lakes ; the snow-capped Jotunheim mountain range in the far distance. The evening shadows were lengthening, the glow of the day was past. We were many hundred feet above the valley, which had a distant dreamy look about it. Full of beauty and repose was the scene, which yet we had little time to contemplate. The end of our day's journey was far off, and the declining sun warned us that much would have to be done in darkness.

Our postboy, a well-grown lad of fifteen, spoke very fair English, which he had learned at school. He was communicative ; he informed us that it was now his holidays, and he had only come with us to oblige the people of the inn. We felt duly honoured. He went circumstantially into the history of his family, to the third and fourth generation. His father was a small farmer, and he pointed out his home—a little house nestling in a plantation of

stunted birch trees, surrounded by cultivated fields—with quite a proud, affectionate look. But he was very happy at school, preferred books to farm work, and would be sorry when the time came for the exchange.

So we reached Sveen, whence an almost continuous descent led through a dense pine district. Gloomy firs surrounded us, extending in long, wave-like undulations far into the distance, rising out of deep ravines wild and desolate—all shrouded, ere the next station was gained, in impenetrable night.

At Tomlevolden the landlord—in a short, decided manner, crushing to weak nerves—said that it was impossible to proceed farther until the next morning. As it was impossible to remain, it was clear that one impossibility must be overcome. The landlord, vexed at finding that he must give way—according to the law they are compelled to find horses for you at any hour of the day or night—kept us waiting until long past midnight, and then despatched us with two men, and an ill-tempered command not to take us beyond the next station; we were to be left there, high and dry, to go through another battle for horses.

We had spent the time very cheerfully in

awakening echoes out of a piano that stood in a corner of the enormous room they had shown us into; sounds almost weird and out of place in this far-off desolate region, wrapped in a silence and solitariness well nigh tangible. Yet it was in keeping with the gloomy depths of Beethoven's melancholy strains, and, for want of moonlight, he might very well have been inspired, had he been there to write a "Midnight" Sonata, full of the ghosts of black forests and the murmur of rushing torrents. In place of Beethoven, there came presently two very pretty girls, dressed in dark, well-fitting gowns, and looking quite like young ladies, who brought us the consolation of steaming coffee in delicate cups, and biscuits handed us with their own fair fingers; compassionating, no doubt, our hard usage, and evidently holding cause with us against their wicked tyrant of a father. This delicious sympathy (the coffee always remembered) was quite worth the price paid for it.

The darkness, as we started afresh, could be felt as well as seen. Stars glittered and flashed in the heavens. One star in particular, rising above the pine-clad hills, looked large and brilliant almost as a small moon. Nothing could be seen around but the dim outlines of the hills, fringed with trees, or clear cut, after their kind. Now, the road was

black and dense with overhanging boughs ; here and there, huge gaps in the earth, suggesting gloomy thoughts of graves and midnight adventures ; and now it opened out upon a large tract of water, into which the running stream emptied itself with determined fury.

The men, unable to speak English, were mysteriously, persistently silent ; only, when passing these yawning roadside pits, exchanging hurried sentences that sounded portentous to our excited imaginations. Why, by the way, does darkness always excite the imagination ? Perhaps they were making up a nice little plot to rob, murder, and bury us out of sight. No one would ever be the wiser ; and, if they would not be much the richer, how were they to know that ? One had heard of such things : of course, all the fearful tales of midnight assassins and mysterious disappearances that had ever come to our knowledge recurred with startling vividness.

But they were better than they seemed, these men ; innocent and even kindly ; for when we reached the next station they offered to take us on to Odnæs, our final destination. We wondered whether those two pretty maidens had stood our friends in need, and, under cover of the night, whispered their instructions into the ears of the men as they were setting out. Whatever the cause, we

gladly closed with the proposal. The people at that last station were evidently all fast, very fast asleep. As for ourselves, we had now only one ambition, one desire in life ; to get to our journey's end and sink into unconsciousness.

The dawn of a new day creeping out of the east. Every moment it grew a little less black and shadowy, and Odnæs was reached in the chill gray light of early morning. It was three o'clock, and we had been twenty-one hours on the road. We paid the men, gave them an extra "*drikke penge*" for their civility in bringing us to the end of our journey—it had been a great accommodation to us, and a piece of benevolence on their part ; and they, rejoicing, went their way to an adjoining barn, no doubt to divide their money amiably, and also sink into oblivion.

We knocked at the inn door for admittance. It was a building much larger and more pretentious than anything we had seen since leaving Bergen ; in fact, quite an hotel, and not a small one. To alight upon such a structure at apparently the ends of the earth was a matter of surprise. At length, in answer to our repeated summons, an unsophisticated lady—stout, not comely, with flowing locks, and a scanty white robe—appeared in the corridor. Her face was pale, and she evi-

dently thought it was fire. We surveyed her through the glass doors with wonder, as a being of another sphere. But no sooner did she catch sight of our amazed gaze, than, with a shriek that sufficiently proved her humanity, she disappeared like a flash of lightning. We were left in solitude. Act the First.

Act the Second commenced with the re-opening of the door through which the celestial vision had vanished, and the issuing therefrom of a folding-screen, propelled as it were by invisible hands, struggling across the corridor. We supposed the celestial being was behind it; we could not be certain. The vision disappeared through the opening whence it had first appeared, a door was violently slammed, and once more silence and solitude.

We were beginning to wax impatient, when Act the Third opened with the arrival of a sleepy, dishevelled maiden, half-dressed, and very human indeed, who unbarred, unbolted the doors, admitted us, and forthwith ushered us to sleeping-rooms. We were grateful, but our hours of unconsciousness, if any, would be short. It was now nearly four o'clock; at six we must be up again for the steamer.

In less than three hours we had packed ourselves, carriages, and baggage on board the boat. Before leaving the hotel we came across the

landlady, and recognised our previous night's apparition. She gave us a shake of the head, half laughing, half indignant, and in a "Good voyage!" sealed our pardon.

The journey up the Randsfjord was pleasant; the lake a little disappointing. It is almost the largest in Norway. At first setting out it was very picturesque, fertile banks, villages and churches, giving life to the landscape, and clusters of weeping birches bending over the clear waters as if enamoured of their own reflection. The early morning sunshine sparkled over all. But making way, and calling at various stations, the hills became uninteresting, the points of the scenery less striking. Finally, it grew monotonous, and we were not sorry when it was over. On the whole, we had been more pleased with the Spirillen, a lake of much smaller extent. Some allowance, perhaps, must be made for the twenty-one hours' journey of the previous day, and a comparatively sleepless night, which would knock out of most people, for the time being, a little of their enthusiasm for the beautiful.

We landed at the Randsfjord station, where most people took train for Christiania. We preferred our carriages and the road, taking the splendid district of the Ringeriget, and were more

than repaid for our extra trouble—if that can be called trouble which affords at once the highest pleasure and delight.

From Randsfjord to Hønefos, the drive lay in part through a great wood. The trees overhead plunged us into delicious shade. Wild flowers and fruit grew in abundance. Again the oak fern, so common in the forests of Norway, charmed the eye, with its fresh, pure green; bilberries, larger and more luscious than any ever seen in England, waited to be gathered in reckless profusion. Flaming scarlet leaves of some unknown plant enlivened the forest-carpet, and the sun chequered our path with long lights and shadows. It was fairyland; and had the little people suddenly made themselves visible, reclining upon the oak ferns, or feasting upon the bilberries, we might have wondered more perhaps, but not have been more enchanted.

The forest passed away, and we launched out upon quite an English scene. Narrow, picturesque lanes; broad plains, animated by genuine farm-houses with their rich stores; fields of grain, where men and women were reaping. Through the fertile plain a silvery river ran its course to the sea. Then all this passed away, and we found ourselves at Hønefos; so rich in its marvellous rushing torrents and waterfalls; such a sheet of wide, falling, tumb-

ling foam, as can hardly be matched in Norway, perhaps not in Europe. The falls are not high, but they are long and wide-spread; the body of water is overwhelming, its force tremendous; a succession of rapids. Neighbouring saw-mills make it more picturesque, and the surrounding country is of the loveliest description.

Altogether Hønefos is worth a sojourn, and the hotel, with its pleasant garden, is comfortable and almost luxurious—at least to any one coming from the less civilised regions of the north. But we had decided to push on to Sundvolden, for the purpose of ascending the famous “King’s View” on the following morning.

Our road lay in part through a wide track of country, and presently we came to the quaint church of Nordenhovs, with its white body, black tapering spire, and little parsonage. The place is historically interesting. Here, in 1716, the wife of the pastor succeeded in betraying six hundred Swedes, by her own wit, into the hands of the Norwegians. The scene rose vividly before one, that quiet evening throwing a romantic glow over the spot that the gathering twilight could not obliterate. One saw the brave woman setting fire to the huge pile of wood, ostensibly to warm the enemy, in reality to give notice to the Norsemen. Then she freely

distributed spirits amongst them (there must have been an abundant supply in the cellars of the good pastor to satisfy six hundred men, but history must not be questioned), and when her countrymen arrived, the enemy fell an easy prey into their hands. Let us hope they received mercy.

Beyond this, skirting a lake and bowling rapidly over a hard, well-made road, we reached the inn of Sundvolden, at the foot of and overshadowed by the mountains one has to climb for a sight of the "King's View." It was kept by the most decent and honest, most civil and obliging landlord it had been our good fortune to meet in all Norway—Jens Klingenberg excepted.

The house itself was somewhat dark and gloomy. Large rooms, furnished in an old-fashioned manner; ponderous four-post bedsteads hung with thick curtains, where at mid-day you might wrap yourself in the darkness of night; long passages, cold, cheerless, and mysterious. But there were smaller rooms at the top, more modern than these ghost-haunted chambers; far more cheerful; out of whose windows you could look upon the great mountains, the opposite lake, and the distant hills. The landlord's courtesy, however, robbed the ghosts of their terrors, and one felt at home and at rest within his portals.

To-night the ghosts were slightly noisy in the shape of a party of Norwegians who were merry in their cups—but a very innocent merriment after all—and slightly romantic in the form of four pairs of lovers ; mutual friends, who did nothing but fall out with each other and fall in again, and thus passed the time in a manner more agreeable to themselves than amusing to those around. Finally, they went off in two conveyances, half gigs, half barouches, and their mirth might be heard far down the road, startling rude echoes in the quiet mountains and affrighting the silence of the lake. By this time the merry-makers above had sought their respective couches ; and when we retired to ours—the new rooms in the roof—if the house was haunted, it was only by the ghosts of departed laughter. This is often quite sufficiently appalling, without troubling the visitants from the world of spirits.

Next morning we ascended the mountain to the “ King’s View,” A. walking, I once more on horse-back. But now there was neither appearance nor reality of danger, as there had been in the Vettifos excursion. No deep precipices, with rushing torrents far down the height ; no turning impossible corners over yawning gulfs where—to allude once more to Bailie Nicol Jarvie, and to quote his words—“ my horse’s head hung down on the tae side, and his tail

on the tother, like the yarn scales in the weigh-house." A safe but rough road led half-way up the mountain; and beyond that a narrower, steeper path, worn into steps and hollows by a multitude of pilgrims, gave access to the summit.

Turning a sharp angle, there burst upon us an immense stretch of fair fertile plain, intersected by villages, lakes, islands, flowing streams and long white roads, backed by an amphitheatre of mountains, range upon range, many of them ice and snow crowned. These stretched far away, and melted into dream pictures. But the view is best seen in the afternoon or early evening, when the declining sun gilds everything with a richer, softer tone, throwing up lights and shadows that add so much to the beauties of nature.

On the lake before us, a dark speck upon the water looked, in the far distance, like a small bird; but a glass quickly magnified it into a gay cavalier rowing a fair dame to the opposite shore. An elopement, perhaps. Surely in such scenes something unusual and romantic must always be taking place! But in Norway elopements are not popular. The cold, calm blood of the Norsemen is little given to impulse—that kind of impulse which acts first, calculates and repents afterwards. The country, too, is unfavourable to these tender episodes. Long

journeys through a hard, rough country, with a prevalent east wind, giving time for reflection, and also for recapture, require a second consideration before they are lightly encountered. Now second thoughts are fatal to impulse, and consequently to elopement.



SKIRTING THE TYRIFJORD.

Before us was the whole range of the Ringerike ; and, stretching away to the left were the calm waters of the Tyrifjord. The view was much of it too far off, too extensive, to be taken in detail ; to be even appreciated at a first visit ; but as we turned away, we felt as if we had been gazing upon

a small country, one of the fair kingdoms of the earth. A party of ladies were struggling upwards, and would soon occupy the seats we had just quitted; the small opening cleared in the mountain height, with the pine trees all about; a spot full of isolation and repose, but a little too much above the world to be quite comfortable.

At noon we started on our last day's journey. In a few hours we should reach Christiania, bid farewell to carriage travelling, the changes and vicissitudes of the road, the wild freedom of this pleasant life. In point of beauty this day equalled anything we had seen since leaving Laerdal. We skirted the borders of the beautiful Tyrifjord, on the one hand; on the other, the mountain-sides were covered with tangle and gorgeous flowers, wild strawberries and raspberries, luscious and abundant. The temptation was too great; we stopped, scrambled up the hill-sides, gathered juicy handfuls of the fruit, and were children once more. Now we passed through vast pine forests; now came out upon views almost as grand as that we had lately seen from the mountain height of Sundvolden; now rumbled over rude bridges spanning streams that dashed over their stony beds, and kissed the tangles that dipped their heated branches in the cooling waters.

Approaching the capital, more life and animation were apparent. Houses sprang up in greater number ; factories and mills sent forth their wonted sounds of labour ; people hurried to and fro as if they had real business to attend to and hard work was the stern order of the day. Sandvigen at last, on the outskirts of Christiania ; so near the great town one could almost hear its rush and roar, feel the oppression of its streets. For the last time we changed horses. At the station, in a room below us, unmistakable signs of rioting and drunkenness were going on. It was the first time we had seen or heard anything of the kind in Norway. As the men one after another came reeling out into the open air, A., pointing to them, said it was evident we were once more approaching civilisation.

Away we went again, and were soon in the fair suburbs of the capital. Strings of villas embowered in luxuriant gardens, where flowers grew in profusion. On these our eyes, long withheld, feasted with keen pleasure. The flowers seen since leaving Christiania had been few and far between, save here and there the wild flowers of the woods growing amidst the ferns ; lovely of their kind, but of another order. Many of these villas, after our late experiences, looked almost palatial ; a dignified calmness and repose, a *noli-me-tangere* air, was over

them all. We were returning to the pomps and vanities of the wicked world.

As to ourselves, launching at length into the busy streets of the town, we felt that for us all calmness and repose were over. With something like a groan we realised how blissful had been the past days, now ended. The hot streets of Christiania were scorching as a furnace after the weeks of magnificent air we had been breathing. The houses seemed to fall upon and suffocate us. A glaring, mocking pair of eyes appeared to be gazing curiously from every window as we clattered along, and awoke the echoes of the quieter side streets; and in a procession of two felt ourselves remarkable and conspicuous as if we had been a procession of twenty. After our late life, where nothing had been more delightfully evident than the absence of men and civilisation, the presence of absolute liberty, freedom from all manner of restraint, this returning to forests of brick and mortar, in place of the glorious pine woods with their eternal solitude and grandeur, was simply the unendurable of that which nevertheless had to be endured.

Such being the case, as we turned into the broad thoroughfare of the Hotel Scandinavia we shook ourselves morally into the condition of stoics, bid a long lingering farewell to the past,

and braced ourselves up to the present and the inevitable.

I am ashamed to say that it had its compensations. As we entered the hospitable portals of the hotel, and presently sat down to a well-appointed table and well-dressed dinner—not least amongst its luxuries the snowy damask and the pure white bread to which we had long been strangers—we felt that, after all, every medal has its reverse side, every cloud its silver lining. A humiliating confession, but truth, like murder, will out soon or syne.

In the visitors' book we saw recorded the name of Herr von X., our pleasant travelling companion to the North Cape. So he had safely braved the dangers of mountain-climbing, crossed the Jostedal Glacier, and was now probably refreshing himself with military manœuvres in Germany.

The next day we devoted to matters small and trifling; but then trifles make up the sum of human life. Strolls about the town. Wondering whether it would ever again be possible to endure these miles and miles of streets, and crowds and crowds of people. Falling amongst friends (where will you go and *not* fall amongst them?) who, proceeding northwards in their yacht, were about to go through many of our late experiences, under more favour-

able conditions. We, alas! had no yacht, and in default embarked at five o'clock on board the steamer for Hull.

A small crowd of passengers was on board; a great crowd lined the quay, of all nations and kindreds and tongues. As the gangway was withdrawn, and the ship left the sides, a subdued shout arose; hats and handkerchiefs were waved, umbrellas were brandished; men and women clung to each other sobbing and sorrowing, having just parted from sons and daughters emigrating to a strange land. Young birds, headstrong and ill-advised, will leave the old nests—and, as aliens, sometimes count the bitter cost. One young fellow on board, unable to bear the sight, and perhaps repenting at the twelfth hour, was with difficulty prevented from throwing himself overboard, and swimming back to land—the dear land; the dear, broken hearts he was leaving behind, his happiness, his all—but never before realised. I for one would have held no staying hand.

Gradually the crowd faded, the houses, the towers and steeples of Christiania grew less and less, until all went out of sight and hearing.

We steamed down the romantic fjord. Twilight fell and gave place to darkness. Mentally, in the blackness of the hour, we wished a long "Good-

night " to picturesque, health - giving Norway ; its lonely pine forests ; its rushing waterfalls ; its fields of ice and marvellous iron-bound coast ; its regions of midnight sun and midnight glory ; its stern, eternal hills, and gentler valleys. And to its hospitable, earnest people, an "Au revoir, sans adieu."

THE END.



